



Legislative Initiative

To: Councilman Paul Kashmann

From: Legislative Services (LS) staff

Date: 4/20/2016

Re: Proposed general comment session before Council meetings and sign-up logistics

Background

Councilman Paul Kashmann is proposing a 30-minute general public comment session, starting at 5pm before the first regularly scheduled Council meeting each month. Speakers will be given 3 minutes each to speak and must sign up ahead of time. The Councilman asked Legislative Services staff to determine the logistics for the sign-up process.

Recommendations

LS staff recommend the following:

Sign-up Process

- Open the sign-up period at 12pm on the Friday before the next scheduled general public comment session.
- Close the sign-up period at 4:30pm the day of the general public comment session.
- Allow members of the public to sign up by:
 - Email using the dencc@denvergov.org address¹; or
 - Phone by calling 720-337-2000; or
 - In-person with a member of the LS staff in City Council's front office (City & County Building, room 451).
- LS staff inputs all sign-up requests in a shared Excel spreadsheet so there is one repository for all the sign-up requests. The spreadsheet includes (see attached example):
 - Date and time the request is received (to manage the first-come, first-served policy)
 - First Name, Last Name
 - Mailing address
 - Email
 - Phone number
 - Whether Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or language interpretation accommodations are requested (must be requested at least one business day in advance)

¹ Once we go live with Granicus, the system replacing SIRE, we will most likely be able to utilize the electronic sign-up kiosk or public portal website instead of the dencc email address.

- Speaker's topic (LS staff will address any issues that can be resolved before or outside of the general comment session and refer the speaker to his/her Council office if appropriate)
- Speaker order is decided on a first-come, first-served basis (using the date/time the sign-up request is received by LS staff) with preference given to those individuals who did not speak at the previous general public comment session.
- Once the sign-up period closes (after the 4:30pm deadline), LS staff prints and posts the speaker order (names only) on the Chambers' doors, in the front office and on each council member's desk on the dais.
- Consistent with Council's sign-up process for public hearings, NO sign-up by proxy is allowed; the person wishing to speak must be the one to sign-up.
- Only one email or phone call or in-person sign-up per person is allowed.
- LS staff taking the sign-up requests will inform the requester that the general public comment session is only 30 minutes and depending on how many individuals sign up, the requester might not be able to speak.
- LS staff addresses any questions that come from the public regarding the sign-up process or the public comment session in general.

Notification Process

- 1) LS staff will develop a hand-out for the public, similar to the one created for public hearings, explaining the public comment session policy and sign-up process (see attached example).
 - This hand-out will be available in the front office (City & County Building, room 451).
 - This hand-out will be included in the Mailchimp submission of the Council meeting agenda and meeting schedule that is distributed the Thursday before a scheduled general public comment session.
- 2) LS staff will announce the general public comment session on the meeting schedule and add details about it on the Council agenda (see attached examples).
- 3) LS staff will add the general public comment policy and sign-up process to the public comment tab on the central website.
- 4) LS staff will add the general public comment policy and sign-up process to the FAQ section on the central website.
- 5) Prior to the scheduled general public comment session, LS staff will post an announcement for the session under "News" on the central website.

Post-meeting Follow-up

- The Legislative Analyst assigned to work the night of a scheduled general public comment session will keep minutes of the speakers' comments and serve as the point of contact for facilitating follow-up responses on issues raised by speakers.
 - The analyst will refer the speaker and his/her issue to the appropriate Council office to address if constituent related.
 - The analyst will use the sign-up spreadsheet to contact speakers (the spreadsheet asks for the speaker's mailing/email address and phone number) and address the issue as appropriate or as requested by a Council member.

Additional Points of Clarification

- The general public comment session will NOT be televised but it WILL be filmed by Denver Media Services so there is a record.
- The general public comment session will take place in the Council Chambers.
- The general public comment session will NOT be an item on the council meeting agenda and roll call will NOT be taken.
- If not enough speakers sign up to fill the entire 30 minutes of the general public comment session, Council will recess until 5:30pm.
- The Council President will allow for points of personal privilege for Council members to clear up any egregious attacks or blatantly wrong comments from speakers.
- At the start of the general public comment session, the Council President will request speakers to honor decorum in the Chambers and refrain from using profanity and from attacking Council members directly.
 - Suggested opening comments by the Council President:

“On the first Council meeting of every month, City Council provides a half-hour general public comment session to hear concerns regarding city matters from the public. To maximize the time for citizen comment, Council will not offer comments or responses from the dais. Council or staff may contact speakers following their comment if they raised matters that lend themselves to follow up. Speakers should refrain from profane or obscene speech. Please direct comments to Council as a whole and refrain from individual or personal attacks.”