

# TIPS FOR TESTIFYING

Thoughts and opinions can be shared with decision makers at any time, but when a Bend resident testifies these words carry great weight because testimony becomes part of the official record used by officials to make decisions. There are several forums for providing testimony at the City level such as at a City Council meeting, a planning commission meeting, a land-use hearing or at meetings of other committees.

Here are some tips for providing effective testimony:

**Observe first.** You may want to consider attending a public meeting or public hearing to familiarize yourself with how the meeting is conducted and how testimony is given

**Prepare.** Prepare what you are planning to say because there is usually a time limit for public statements or testimony, usually three minutes. The time limits may be more or less depending on the number of people who wish to speak. Do not memorize your testimony; you can speak more informally or read it word-for-word

**Know your facts.** Whether speaking during the visitor period or a public hearing, know the facts of the case upon which you wish to testify. Contact the appropriate department in City Hall if you have questions about the topic about which you are testifying. Learn as much as you can about the issue and note just the facts. Accurate information weighs more heavily than opinion. Support your statements with valid references.

**Write out your statement or testimony.** If you attend a public meeting or hearing, you will observe that many people who testify do so from written testimony. Choose your main points and write them down. Writing out your testimony can help to organize it and may reduce some of the emotion that you might feel about the topic or issue

**State your position.** When making a statement or testimony, clearly state the issue, your position on that issue, and what you would like the Council or committee to do. It is helpful if you suggest solutions to the situation(s) or issue(s) you are addressing. It is also helpful if you are courteous and professional to the committee and others during your statement or testimony

**Be concise.** Since a hearing on a controversial matter may last for several hours, a concise presentation is helpful. A clearly presented argument can be very forceful

**Bring a copy of your complete testimony.** Include research sources to leave with the committee members. You do not need to limit the length of your written testimony

**Offer a Solution.** Take advantage of having an audience to hear your recommendation. Relate how this issue directly affects you and what you would like to see done

**Don't repeat others' testimony.** If you are planning to speak during a public hearing, listen to the testimony of others who speak and be sure to offer new information