

TIPS FOR PROVIDING ORAL COMMENTS

Bendites can share thoughts and opinions with decision-makers at any time through various methods of communication, but when a community member provides oral comment in a public forum, their words can carry great weight by becoming a part of the public record used by officials to make decisions.

There are several forums for providing live comments, including advisory committee meetings, and Planning Commission and City Council meetings and hearings.

Here are some tips for providing oral comments:

OBSERVE FIRST

You may want to consider attending a public meeting or hearing to familiarize yourself with how these types of meetings are conducted, and in what format oral public comment is provided.

KNOW YOUR FACTS

Whether speaking during the visitor's section of a public meeting or at a public hearing, be well informed about the topic upon which you wish to comment on. Learn as much as you can about the issue prior to speaking, and note the facts in your presentation. In order to have a greater impact, support your statements with valid references including code sections and decision-making criteria, which are the foundation of most legislative decisions. Contact the appropriate department in City Hall if you have questions about the topic about which you are commenting.

PREPARE

If you attend a public meeting or hearing, you will observe that many people who speak, do so using written testimony as a guide. It is important to prepare what you are going to say as there is usually a time limit for public statements, which can vary depending on the meeting agenda and the number of people who want to speak. Times can range from 90 seconds to 5 minutes. At minimum, choose your main points and write them down. Writing out your testimony can help to organize it and keep you on track while you are speaking.

STATE YOUR POSITION CLEARLY AND RESPECTFULLY

When providing oral comment, you should clearly state the issue, your position on the issue, and what you would like the Council or committee to do about it. It is helpful if you are courteous and professional to the decision-makers and others during your presentation.

BE CONCISE

Since a hearing on a controversial matter may last for several hours, a concise presentation is helpful and a clearly presented argument can be very impactful, even if it isn't very long.



BRING A COPY OF YOUR COMPLETE TESTIMONY

Include research sources to leave with the decision-makers. You do not need to limit the length of your written testimony, though clear and concise documents are most effective. You can also submit your testimony in writing prior to the meeting or hearing.

OFFER A SOLUTION

Take advantage of having an audience to hear your recommendation. Relate how this issue directly affects you and remember to include what actions you would like to see taken.

DON'T REPEAT OTHERS' COMMENTS

If you are planning to speak during a public hearing, proper etiquette is to listen to the testimony of others who speak, state whether you agree or disagree with prior statements and offer new information.



Accommodation Information for People with Disabilities

To obtain this information in an alternate format such as Braille, large print, electronic formats, etc. please contact Makayla Oliver, Community Relations Manager at moliver@bendoregon.gov or (541) 323-8571. Relay Users Dial 7-1-1.

