

City Council Public Speaking Tips/Suggestions

Here are some tips for speaking at Glendale City Council, with logistics and suggestions to help you deliver an effective message.

There are a few times during a meeting when people are allowed to address City Council. One is during the public comment period for an item on the agenda. The other two times are for speaking about topics that aren't on the agenda:

- a. Community events announcements: Usually following City Council/staff comments, closer to the beginning of a meeting, allowing 3 minutes to speak. There's a limited number of slots for people to speak during this period, so you need to get to the Council meeting early to snag a speaker card for it (see below re speaker cards).
- b. Oral communications: Usually just before the meeting end, allowing 5 minutes to speak.

Fill out a speaker card when you arrive. The ones for the community events announcements time are available from the City Clerk (Ardy Kassakhian), so you need to ask him for one them. His desk is on the left side of the dais at the front of the room. The cards for oral communications and agenda items are on the table at the back of the council chamber, or ask one of the staff members or volunteers where they are. Be sure to note the agenda item number or "oral communications" on the speaker card. You don't need to include all of your contact information on the card, but include your name, and if you're a Glendale resident, note that. Turn in the speaker card to Ardy or a staff member at the table on the left side of the dais.

At the podium, there's a timer with green, yellow, and red lights. The light will change from green to yellow when you have one minute left, and it will turn red when your time is up. There'll also be a beep when your time is up. If you haven't finished your remarks by then, you can finish your thought briefly, but be sure to wrap it up quickly, or the mayor may cut you off.

City Council members may say something in response to your comments, but you shouldn't speaker further unless they ask you a direct question.

What's your message? We're available to help you with ideas for topics and to help you craft a message, so reach out if you'd like some help. And, we'd like to coordinate messages, so even if you've got it covered, please let us know what you're planning to talk about.

Here are some tips for how to deliver an effective message:

1) Start with a brief and concise introduction.

It helps to think of who you're speaking to! The Councilmembers and staff are people just like you, just temporarily occupying public elected or un-elected roles. Here is an e.g. intro: "Good evening Mr. Mayor, City Councilmembers, and staff. My name is XYZ and I live in XYZ. I've come here to talk about/bring to your attention XYZ." Additionally, some people say how long they've lived in Glendale if that is applicable.

2) Know your message, know what you want to say.

This may seem obvious, but it never hurts to **triple check you really know what you want to convey to your audience**. If it's about an issue, what do you think about the issue? Why does it matter to you? Who else does it matter to? What do you want to know about the City's plan about it? Do they have a plan? State some basic facts about the issue to indicate you know what you're talking about!

It helps to practice in advance with a timer so you know how long it will take.

When you step up to the podium, you might get nervous. Don't worry. Just focus on your message. You'll only be speaking for a few minutes. Speak clearly, take pauses, and pace yourself. Articulate your message clearly.

If you want to share more information than you have time for, you can submit written materials to staff at the left side of the dais at the end of your comments. If possible, print six copies, one for each Councilmember including the Mayor, and one for staff.

Being polite and professional goes a long way, and it doesn't indicate you don't mean business. That you are organized, persistent, and clear in your message carries more weight than if you are confrontational and rude. That said, feel free to voice your displeasure as it pertains to specific aspects of the issue you spoke about. If you're angry about something, explain what and why so you don't come across as simply a disgruntled citizen without a clear concern you want addressed.

3) End your comments graciously yet firmly.

In a few words, remind your audience why you showed up.

It's appropriate to end your comments by thanking the Mayor, Council, and staff for their time and reaffirming you hope action is taken on the topic of your message.