

City of Wells
Decorum and Debate Rules Council Meetings

Decorum and Debate Rules

Council members, City employees, and citizen participants are expected to reflect proper decorum and treat all participants with respect and courtesy at meetings.

City Council Members

A Council member who wishes to speak must address the Presiding Officer for leave to do so. Upon recognition, the Council member should address the topic under discussion only.

When two or more members wish to speak, the presiding officer shall name the member who is to speak first. No Council member must exceed specified time limits when addressing questions or amendments unless given special leave to do so, or if another Council member has yielded their time to them. The Presiding Officer is under no obligation to recognize any member of the Council more than once, on a subject until all Council members desiring to speak have been allowed to do so.

A Council member who has the floor shall not be interrupted unless it is deemed necessary to call that member to order. Until the question of order is determined, the Council member must cease speaking, unless permitted to explain. If the Council member is determined to be in order he/she may proceed.

Council members should avoid indulging in personalities; using inappropriate or offensive language; maligning motives of other members or City staff; or use language that holds other City Council members up to contempt.

If a Council member's integrity and or motives are questioned or maligned he/she shall have the right to deliver a speech of personal privilege.

At no time during City Council meetings shall members interrupt or delay proceedings, nor shall they refuse to obey the rules of the Presiding Officer or the City Council.

During Presentations by City employees and Citizens, Council members should ask questions that pertain to the matter at hand and refrain from engaging in dialogue with City staff and citizens.

City Employees

City employees shall avoid interrupting proceedings or engaging in debate with Council members, staff, witnesses, or the Presiding Officer.

City employees must wait until they are recognized by the Presiding Officer and given leave to speak.

Once they have the floor they must direct all questions and remarks to the Council through the Presiding Officer.

All remarks and questions addressed to the City Council shall be limited to the matter under discussion and should be addressed to the Council as a whole.

Citizen Participation

All visitors attending Council meetings must sign the visitor's register that is provided.

A person who intends to speak at a council meeting must complete a "Speaker Registration Card" and indicate the subject that they wish to address, in addition to signing the visitor's register, and present the Card to the City Secretary at time and date specified by the city.

Citizens wishing to address a matter not presented on the agenda may sign up under the "Hear Visitors" portion of the agenda (3 Minute speaking time). Members may refer speaker to specific City services, respond with a statement of factual data, recite the City's existing policy, or may promise to address the issue at a future meeting: They are prohibited from acting on items not listed on meeting agenda.

At all meetings, the Presiding Officer will either limit the number of speakers to a specified number per agenda item and or ask the speakers if they wish to speak for or against an item on the agenda.

If three or more citizens wish to address the same position on an agenda item they may be asked to appoint a spokesman to address the Council, in order to circumvent repetitive arguments and testimony.

Any citizen that is signed in as a visitor but not signed in to speak shall sit in the audience as a spectator only. That same citizen cannot disrupt the council meeting.

Speaker Rules

Speakers may not address the council unless recognized by the Presiding Officer.

No speaker shall exceed their time limit (3 minutes) without special permission from the Presiding Officer or Council.

All comments and questions must be addressed to the Presiding Officer and the City Council at large.

Speakers must not indulge in personalities; use inappropriate or offensive language; or malign motives of Council members.

City Council members may ask questions or briefly acknowledge the speaker. Due to this, more time may be granted to the speaker by the Presiding Officer or by the Council.

The Presiding Officer shall not deny registered citizens the right to speak unless the agenda item for which they registered has been moved to a later meeting. If the agenda item is moved to a later meeting the person who registered to speak must re-register as a speaker at the subsequent meeting, during which the agenda item will be considered.

Rule Enforcement

The Presiding Officer shall be charged with preserving order and decorum.

If any request by the Presiding Officer is not obeyed the following steps may be taken

The person who is violating a rule will be warned, by the Presiding Officer, to cease the violation. If the violation is continued the Presiding Officer will threaten removal from the meeting room. Continuance of the violation will warrant the offender being ordered to leave the meeting room. Any violator who resists removal can be forcibly removed by any Peace Officer present.

If multiple violations are occurring by a group or groups of individuals, which prohibit orderly conduct from being restored even after removal, may cause the meeting to be recessed or adjourned.