



City of Albemarle Rules for Public Comment

Purpose

The City of Albemarle City Council is committed to affording the members of the public an opportunity to offer comments and suggestions for the wise, efficient and effective government of the City of Albemarle. Council encourages and welcomes the input of citizens. A Public Comment Period will be provided at every monthly, regular meeting for the Council to receive comments and suggestions from the public on topics pertaining to City business. In order to balance the need and desire for such citizen input with the necessity of disposing of its regular business in the course of the meeting, the City of Albemarle City Council does hereby establish the following Rules for Public Comment pursuant to North Carolina General Statutes 160A-81.1.

Rules:

1. Time and Location: Unless posted otherwise as required by law, Council convenes its monthly public hearings and regular meetings on the first and third Mondays of each month in the Council Chambers at the City of Albemarle City Hall. The Public Comment Period will still be listed on the agenda towards the beginning of the meeting.
2. Types of Speakers: City Council recognizes announced, unannounced, and invited delegations. Announced delegations are people who notified the City Clerk by the Monday prior to a City Council meeting that they intend to address the governing body. Unannounced delegations are people who did not notify the City Clerk by the deadline of the Monday prior to the meeting of their intent to address the governing body. Invited delegations are those invited by the City Council or City staff to speak at Council meetings.
3. Sign-up Sheet for Unannounced Delegations: Any person who wishes to address the Council during the Public Comment Period must register on the sign-up sheet located in the main lobby of the City Hall complex up to thirty (30) minutes before the start of the meeting by listing his/her name, address and comment topic(s). Any person unable to be present in time to sign up due to circumstances beyond his/her control may be allowed to speak at the discretion of the Mayor.
4. Speaking Order for Unannounced Delegations: Speakers will be called on in the order in which the names appear on the sign-up sheets. The Mayor will recognize all persons who indicate a desire to speak by directing each person, one at a time, to proceed to the podium. Before beginning comments, each speaker will state his/her name and address.

5. Time Allotted for Each Speaker: Speakers will be requested to discuss only the topic(s) they specified on the sign-up sheet. It is important to note that any speaker wishing to address City Council may only do so during the public comment period called by the Mayor. Both announced and unannounced delegations have a total per meeting limit of thirty (30) minutes to speak, collectively. Each speaker is limited to three (3) minutes.
6. Timekeeper: When applicable, the designated timekeeper will be the City Clerk, who will begin timing the speaker after recording the speaker's name and address for the public record.
7. Public Hearings: Sign up is not required prior to speaking during a public hearing. Speakers will be limited to one hour total with speakers in favor of an agenda item limited 30 minutes and opposition speakers limited 30 minutes. Each of the ten speakers per side will be limited to three (3) minutes per person.
8. Presentation Materials: Electronic presentation materials provided by announced delegations or unannounced delegations (including members of the public speaking in public hearings), **will not be accepted for display during the meeting**. Physical copies of any materials can be submitted to Council and the City Clerk for record keeping. Electronic presentations by petitioners, applicants or invited delegations should be submitted to the City Clerk by 12:00 noon on the Thursday before the meeting. This will allow adequate time for Information Systems to conduct a security scan and the City Clerk to confirm the material complies with City policy.
9. Written Comments: At the end of the allotted time, a speaker may also submit written comments to the City Clerk, who will submit written comments to the Mayor and all Council members the following business day, if a sufficient number of copies are not provided by the speaker. The Clerk will not read submitted comments into the record.
10. Number of Speakers on Each Topic: It is recommended that groups or delegations select their spokesperson(s) in advance of the meeting. A group or delegation is defined as two (2) or more people who have organized a response and appear together at a meeting to speak on a specific topic. The spokesperson will also be subject to any time restrictions imposed by Council.
11. Topic Exclusions: Speakers should not comment on matters which are closed session topics including, but not limited to, matters within the attorney-client privilege, non-public economic development initiatives; and/or all other matters which are made confidential by law.

12. Time Allotment Exclusions: Invited Delegations and petitioners/applicants or their designee are not subject to time constraints.
13. Address to the Council: Speakers will address all comments to the Council as a whole, not to one or more members as individuals, and not to any City of Albemarle staff member or audience member. Discussions between speakers and the audience will not be allowed. Speakers will address the Council with respect and courtesy and will not do or say anything that will interfere with the dignity and decorum of the meeting. If the speaker disrupts the meeting, the speaker will be asked to refrain from speaking until decorum is established.
14. Response to Comments: At the end of a speaker's comments, any member of the Council may request that the City Manager, Assistant City Manager, or City Attorney respond to a concern raised by the speaker.
15. Questions on Comments: At the end of a speaker's comments, any member of the Council may ask the speaker such questions as they might deem necessary for clarification.
16. Action by City Council: Speakers should not expect City Council deliberation or action on any subject matter brought up during the Public Comment Period. Topics requiring further investigation will be referred to the appropriate City staff and may be scheduled for consideration as an agenda item during a future regular meeting.