

# Citizen Participation in City Council Meetings



Revised March 2017

### **CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOPS**

The purpose of a City Council workshop is to provide a forum for City Council and City staff members to discuss various subjects related to City operations, projects, and planning. Members of the City's Commissions, Boards, and/or Committees may also be present to discuss various subjects with City Council and City staff. Citizens are welcome to attend; however, there will be no public comment opportunity at the Workshops. If citizens have comments or questions for City Council or City staff, they may attend a Regular City Council meeting and sign up to speak during the Citizen Communications section of the agenda. Citizens are also welcome to communicate with City Council members and/or City staff outside of public meetings by contacting City Hall.

### **PUBLIC HEARINGS**

Anyone wishing to speak at a public hearing must sign their name and address on the approved form available at each public hearing. Each person, other than a Council Member or City staff member, speaking at a public hearing will be allowed 3 minutes to make their comments unless the presiding officer extends the time allotted and no person may speak more than twice at each public hearing. No person may donate their time to another person.

### **REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETINGS**

Although Texas Law does not provide for an opportunity for citizens to participate in local government meetings, the City of Rockdale believes our citizens have every right to participate in Regular City Council meetings, and we encourage citizens to do so. Regular City Council meeting agendas have time set aside for Citizen Communications near the beginning of the meeting, and there are additional public comment opportunities on the agenda if a particular item requires a public hearing by law.

Please remember that during Citizen Communications, in accordance with the Texas Open Meetings Act, Council Members are prohibited from answering questions (other than to make statements of fact or to recite existing policy), discussing issues raised by citizens, or taking any action on an item that is not on the agenda for that meeting. Issues raised may be referred to staff for research and possible future action.

### **SIGNING UP TO SPEAK**

Citizens wishing to speak during a Regular City Council meeting must write their name and the agenda item number they wish to speak about on the Request to Speak form PRIOR to 5:30 PM when the meeting begins. The Request to Speak sign-in form will be available in the Council Chambers on the table by the entrance, next to the agendas, prior to the meeting. If you do not sign up to speak prior to the start of the meeting, you may not have an opportunity to speak. Citizens are not allowed to speak openly during the meeting unless first recognized by the presiding officer (typically the Mayor). When the presiding

officer calls their name, citizens may speak for no more than 5 minutes. Any digital presentations must be submitted and checked for content prior to the meeting.

Citizens who attend the meeting as part of a group may not give their time to another member of the group. The presiding officer may stop the person from speaking further if the remarks or gestures are profane, abusive, inflammatory or otherwise offensive. Persons who refuse to stop speaking at the direction of the presiding officer may be escorted from the meeting by a law enforcement officer at the request of the presiding officer.

### **RULES FOR SPEAKING DURING COUNCIL MEETINGS**

1. Members of the public may address the City Council at the following times during a Regular Meeting: (a) During the Citizen Participation section of the agenda after your name is called by the presiding officer if you have signed up to speak prior to the start of the meeting; (b) During the Public Hearing section after your name is called by the presiding officer if you have signed up to speak prior to the start of the meeting; and (c) When the presiding officer invites you to speak.
2. Speakers must state their name and address for the record prior to making their comments. Please speak clearly so everyone in the room can hear you.
3. Speakers must address all comments to the presiding officer, not to the audience or staff members.
4. Speakers must limit their comments to no more than 5 minutes.
5. Speakers must not employ tactics of defamation, intimidation, personal affronts, profanity, yelling, or threats of violence. Anyone who demonstrates these behaviors will be removed from the Council Chambers.
6. Members of the audience are not allowed to speak out of turn or to interrupt the Mayor, Council Members, staff, or other speakers when they are speaking. If you would like to comment, please sign up to speak and wait until the presiding officer calls your name and you will have an equal opportunity to be heard. We welcome and encourage citizens to participate during the Citizen Communications and/or Public Hearing sections of the meeting; however, out of respect for everyone in attendance, any disruptions will result in the offending party being removed from the Council Chambers.

### **PROVIDING WRITTEN COMMENTS/DOCUMENTS TO CITY COUNCIL**

If you wish to bring hard-copies of documents to the meeting for Council, you must bring 10 copies and provide them to the City Secretary PRIOR to the start of the meeting for distribution. This ensures the Mayor, City Manager, City Attorney, City Secretary, and the Council Members each receive a copy. If fewer than 10 copies are provided to the City Secretary, the document may not be provided to Council Members until after the meeting when sufficient copies can be made for each member.

## About Us

The City of Rockdale was incorporated in 1874 and is a Home Rule City with a Council-Manager form of government. The City Council consists of the Mayor (At-Large), three Council Members from the East Ward, and three Council Members from the West Ward. Members of the City Council are elected to office at a general election held in May of each year, based on three-year staggered terms. For more information about the City of Rockdale, please visit our website.

Regular City Council Meetings are held on the second Monday of each month at 5:30 PM at City Hall. Please sign up for "Notify Me" on our website to receive notifications of changes in meeting dates and times, posting of agendas, and other community news.

## REMINDER TO MEETING ATTENDEES

Please remember to mute or turn off your cell phones or other devices BEFORE entering the Council Chambers. If you need to have a conversation with someone during the meeting, please STEP OUTSIDE in order to avoid disrupting the meeting or preventing others from being able to hear the proceedings.

## Contact Us

If you have any questions or special requests regarding City Council meetings, please contact the City Secretary:

505 West Cameron Avenue  
Post Office Box 586  
Rockdale, Texas 76567

Phone: 512-446-2511  
Email: [citysecretary@rockdalecityhall.com](mailto:citysecretary@rockdalecityhall.com)

Web: [www.rockdalecityhall.com](http://www.rockdalecityhall.com)