

City of Hemphill
City Council Meeting
Speaker Policy and Protocol

Welcome to the City of Hemphill, City Council Meeting. The following are a few tips designed to help you understand the proceedings of the meeting.

A “Citizen Comments” section is included in the agenda for each Regular City Council Meeting for persons that reside inside the corporate city limits of Hemphill, that own property or a business inside the city limits, or that have business or legal issues that relates to the City.

The “Citizen Comments” portion of the printed agenda is to allow persons an opportunity to address the City Council on issues that are not the subject of a public hearing or on the City Council agenda.

For any item on the meeting agenda and/or requiring a public hearing, pursuant to House Bill No. 2840, Texas Government Code section 551.007 (a)-(e), the City Council allows persons to speak at the time the item appears on this agenda, as indicated as "Public Hearing", or before or during the City Council’s consideration of the specific agenda item.

Any disruptive behavior by the speaker or person in attendance at the council meeting may cause the individual to be removed from the meeting and charged with the crime of disrupting a lawful meeting.

In order for the Council to properly consider each matter brought to it by the citizens, speakers must observe the following rules:

- Anyone wishing to speak before the Council must complete a speaker card and submit it to the City Secretary/Accountant at least 5 minutes prior to the meeting being called to order.
- Anyone speaking before the Council is asked, when their name is called, to stand, first state his/her name and address for the record, and discuss the topic of interest. Only one person may speak at any one time and only the person who has been called by the Presiding Officer will be allowed to speak. The Presiding Officer will normally be the Mayor.
- Speakers must wait to be recognized by the presiding officer.
- Speakers must address their comments to the presiding officer rather than individual Council Members, City staff, or the audience.
- Due to legal requirements the Mayor and City Council cannot take specific action on Citizens’ Comments, which are not included in the agenda, they will hear the topic and the Mayor and City Council may:
 - 1) Have the item placed on a future agenda for action; or 2) Recitation of existing policy in response to the inquire; or 3) Refer the item to staff for study or conclusion.

- Further, the Council reserves the right to limit the number of speakers that will be heard on matters not on the meeting agenda during any City Council meeting. The Council also may elect to adjourn its meetings at any time, even if it delays or limits the public comments with the Council.
- Time limits for speaking are: Visitors/Citizen Forum/Comments: 4 minutes. Agenda Items: 6 minutes. Public Hearings: 6 minutes. If a speaker's comments are longer than the established time limits the speaker may file written remarks or supporting information with the City Secretary/Accountant. The City Secretary/Accountant will make the information available to the Council if requested.
- A person who addresses the Council concerning an agenda item, including a Public Hearing, must limit his/her remarks to the specific subject matter being considered by the Council under that agenda item.
- The Council prohibits disruptive comments from the public regarding staff or council members. The speaker must avoid discussion of personalities, indecorous language, and refrain from personal attacks and verbal abuse. Complaints or discussions about individual council members, city staff, or other persons will not be heard by the Council during the meeting. Charges or complaints about specific individuals shall be presented in writing to the Mayor or City Manager, as appropriate.
- Persons in attendance shall not carry signs, placards or other items, which could block the view of those behind them or could be disruptive to the proceedings. No person attending any council meeting shall delay the proceedings or refuse to obey the order of the presiding officer.
- All persons are encouraged to attend council meetings. However, the number admitted shall be limited to the fire safety capacity of the council chamber as determined by the Fire Marshal.
- Any disruptive behavior by the speaker or a person in attendance at the council meeting may cause the individual to be removed from the meeting. The presiding officer, which is usually the mayor, shall exercise control over persons who disrupt the meeting in the following ascending order of action:
 - 1) Call the person to order, advising that person of the infraction.
 - 2) Advise the person that the infraction must cease immediately or the person will be ordered to leave the meeting.
 - 3) Order the person to leave the meeting.
 - 4) Order a Public Safety Officer to remove the person. Any person who resists removal by a Public Safety Officer shall be charged with violating Section 42.05 of the Texas Penal Code, a Class B misdemeanor.
 - 5) The subject matter of the speaker's presentation should be one on which the City Council has legal authority to act, such as City policies, Council policy and legislative issues.