

How to Address Council and Have an Effective Presentation

In order for you, as a delegation, to make an effective presentation, you should know that Councillors get a lot of information at their meetings. It is important and useful for them to know before the meeting what issues are going to be discussed. Agendas are prepared by the Clerk's office for this purpose and contain staff reports which provide the necessary background information as well as proposed recommendations.

Write out your presentation. This can help to keep you focused and stay within the time allowed.

Do you have written material you would like the Councillors to receive before the meeting? It is best to make this information available in advance of the meeting so that Councillors and staff are aware of your concerns. This can be done either through attaching it to the agenda prepared for the meeting (distributed on the Friday before the meeting date), or handed out at the beginning of the meeting. If handouts are to be provided at the meeting please be prepared to provide 10 copies for Councillors and staff.

Please note that any presentations, submissions or handouts provided are public information and posted on the municipal website. This also includes any contact information that any of these items contain. Staff from the Clerk's office will assist you in getting this information distributed.

Do you have an audio-visual presentation? Are you planning to show a PowerPoint presentation, view websites, or even have maps, videos or photos you would like to show? The Council Chamber is equipped with current audiovisual equipment so Councillors and staff can view your presentation. There is a dedicated computer for this purpose in the Council Chamber and external computers are not used for presentations. Staff in the Clerk's office will assist you in arranging for your needs. Please be prepared to provide electronic materials at least 4 days before the meeting to allow time for your presentation to be checked by staff to ensure all will run as expected. Don't assume that your presentation will work on another computer the same way as it does on yours, so it is wise to make these arrangements in advance. All presentations are attached to the minutes and posted to the website for public information.

At the Meeting Delegations are usually heard near the beginning of Council meetings. Each individual delegation has 10 minutes to speak. When it is time for you to speak, the Mayor (or Chair) will call your name. At that time, you will come forward to the podium at the front of Council Chamber. At the start of your presentation please be sure to clearly state your name, organization or group you are with, and to speak directly into the microphone provided. Time limits are strictly followed but the Mayor may allow a delegation to speak longer. The Mayor also typically warns delegations when they are nearing the end of their time limit.

Please direct your comments to the Mayor rather than to individual Councillors. You may want to begin your presentation with: “Good afternoon, Mayor X and members of Council. I would like to speak to you about ...”, or in some similar way, as you feel comfortable. Keep your comments to the point and avoid wandering from the topic you came to speak about. Following your presentation you may be asked questions by the Councillors to clarify items in your presentation or for further information which may not have been provided.

After you have spoken and there are no further questions, you will be asked to sit down. Councillors may then:

- Debate your request among themselves
- Ask staff for more information
- Discuss the item later in the agenda and make a decision
- Refer the item to a future meeting if they feel they need more information before making a decision
- Simply receive the item for information (which means no decision to change current policy is supported)

All Council meetings follow “Robert’s Rules of Order” regarding procedure. All meeting rules and processes are also guided by the Municipality’s Procedure By-law No. B2016-029, as amended, which is available on the website, as well as by contacting the Clerk’s office.

All electronic devices should be turned to non-audible or silent while attending meetings in Council Chamber.

Tips for Effective Presentations

1. Show up early enough that your presentation can be loaded (if you did not send it in advance) and handouts can be distributed.
2. Identify your main point right from the start and stay on topic.
3. Speak clearly. You will be using a microphone so you do not need to speak loudly, but make sure you speak into the microphone (adjustable).
4. Stick to your time limit. Keep your presentation relevant and to the point; you only have 10 minutes. Make sure you use your time well. It’s always okay to stop speaking before your time is up if you’ve made your point.
5. Keep it simple; use facts not generalities. People often stop paying attention when presented with complicated drawings and tables. Use simple graphics and highlight the points that are important. Maps are always useful if you’re referring to a particular location. Support your message with facts that are specific, provable and memorable. Avoid using acronyms and jargon as not everyone is aware of their meaning.
6. Don’t just read from slides. If you’re simply reading your slides as presented you may quickly lose the interest of everyone in the room. Try to add to the information on the slides, keeping your audience engaged in what you are saying rather than just having them read along with you.
7. Don’t skip around. Skipping over slides, backtracking to previous information, or including things that don’t really belong gives the impression that you are unorganized.

8. Repeat your main point (or summarize your point of view) at the end of your presentation. It is important and can help Councillors remember what is important to you.