



# 9. Providing Public Testimony

Toolbox Section

# A

Neighborhood Management

## Introduction

Giving public testimony before any group of people can be challenging and uncertain for individuals that are not prepared or have never done so before. Because public testimony becomes part of public record and is subject to the Texas Open Records Act, delivering a message that is concise and clear will be beneficial to you as the speaker. The steps and tools listed below provide guidance to assist you in the delivering your concerns with clarity before City Council or in a board meeting.

Step	Explanation
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**Know Your Audience**

Learning about your audience is the first key to ensure a successful presentation. It is important to know their mission, purpose, and their objectives. Study your subject matter thoroughly and see if this subject has been discussed at any previous meetings so that you will have all of the facts and details of the subject. It is also important to know if the group has influence on the subject matter on which you are presenting.

**Be Prepared**

Doing your homework on the subject, place and body that you are speaking before can be critical to the outcome of your delivery. Make sure that you arrive in enough time to get settled and prepared for your testimony. Get a copy of the agenda ahead of time so that you know when the subject is scheduled on the agenda. If it is required that you sign a speaker’s card, make sure you do so before the meeting begins.

Many times the person presiding over the meeting will notify you how much time you have to speak. Make certain that your statements are concise and prepared to fit in the time slot allotted. Typically the allotted time will be given to you, but be prepared to speak under 5 minutes.

**Preparing to Speak**

Start by addressing your audience appropriately (i.e.: Mr./Ms. Mayor/ Chair, or Members of the Council/Board). Also state your name and address for the record. Identify the key points to your position on the subject and briefly outline those for the audience. Make sure they are clear and concise and to the point. Bring with you any supporting documentation (petitions, letters, surveys, minutes from other meetings).



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<b>Preparing to Speak</b> <i>(continued)</i>	State your purpose for appearing before the council or board. If you are only representing your personal position on the subject matter, do not mention the names or organizations you are affiliated with or imply that you speak on behalf of others without their clear and documented permission.
<b>Prepare For Possible Questions</b>	After you have completed your statements and testimony, sometimes members of the council or board may follow-up with questions or clarifications from your statements. Be prepared to answer these questions in full detail or provide copies of any documents you may have referred to. The council or board may want to refer to the documents that you presented during your testimony. Try to maintain eye contact with the council or board during the duration of them asking you questions so that you are engaged in their subject matter.
<b>Suggestions and Other Considerations</b>	<p>When planning for a board meeting or council meeting there can be some challenges and uncertainty. Put forth the effort to prepare before you walk down to the microphone to represent your position successfully.</p> <p>Dress appropriately for the type of audience you are presenting to. This will give the impression that you are there to do a service and provide a professional opinion. Always state your name clearly and where you reside for the record.</p> <p>The City Secretary's Office can provide agendas, minutes and digital copies of previous meetings. It is helpful to utilize them as a resource before you attend a meeting.</p> <p>Above all, remember to be calm and you will do just fine!</p>
<b>Available Resources</b>	City Secretary's Office - 972-205-2403 <a href="http://www.ci.garland.tx.us">www.ci.garland.tx.us</a>