

Rule 10. Public Participation (Excerpt from Great Falls City Commission Rules of Conduct and Procedure of Commission Meetings [Resolution 10322 adopted November 19, 2019 and as amended by Resolution 10359 adopted July 7, 2020]

Procedures for encouraging and assisting public participation, and established protocol and rules of decorum at public meetings held by the City Commission, are as follows:

1. Persons addressing the Commission shall come to the podium and provide for the record that person's name and either their address or whether they are a City resident, and, if applicable, the person, firm or organization the person represents.
2. Speakers shall address their comments to the presiding officer and the Commission as a body and not to any individual member of the Commission or City staff.
3. Public hearings and public comment periods on agenda items, unless otherwise provided by law, are in the nature of advisory hearings before the Commission. They are held for the purpose of noticing legislative facts, and receiving expressions of public opinion on a question, including the views of interested parties.
4. During public hearings and public comment periods, speakers shall limit their address to the Commission on agenda items to five (5) minutes, unless further time is granted by the presiding officer with the concurrence of the Commission. During the petitions and communications portion of any meeting, speakers shall limit their address to the Commission to three (3) minutes, unless further time is granted by the presiding officer with the concurrence of the Commission.
5. Speakers shall keep their comments germane to the subject item on the agenda or, during petitions and communications, matters of significant public interest which are within the jurisdiction of the Commission. Public comment generally is not intended for a two-way dialogue between speaker(s), Commission member(s), and/or the City Manager or City staff; however, the presiding officer, with the concurrence of the Commission, may allow questions to be asked of or by speakers.
6. Speakers shall refrain from irrelevant or unduly repetitious communications or other behaviors, which disrupt, disturb or impede the orderly conduct of the meeting, or incite violence.
7. Speakers are prohibited from using vulgar, discriminatory, profane or impertinent speech, or personal attacks and personal accusations, which disrupt, disturb or impede the orderly conduct of the meeting, or incite violence.
8. Speakers and persons in the audience shall not delay or interrupt the proceedings or refuse to obey the orders of the presiding officer.

9. Audio/Visual (AV) equipment is reserved for City Commission deliberations for clarity and understanding of issues to make decisions on matters that impact the City. Citizens may submit data, views, or arguments, orally or in written form, to the Commission or City Clerk, prior to or during the meeting. Citizens wishing to submit written information while at podium shall place it on the table next to the podium, unless directed otherwise by the presiding officer.
10. Any person, including one with special needs, who may want to offer public comment on any matter, may provide a written statement for the record to the City Clerk for distribution to the Commission in lieu of offering oral comment. The time limits set forth above shall apply to any oral presentation or reading of any such written statement of testimony.
11. Objects that are deemed a threat or perceived to be a threat to persons at the meeting or the facility infrastructure are not allowed and the object, or the person possessing the object, may be subject to search for weapons and other dangerous materials. The Chief of Police or his designee(s) are authorized to remove items and/or individuals from the meeting rooms if a threat exists or is perceived to exist.
12. Speakers and persons in the audience shall refrain from creating, provoking or participating in any type of disturbance, which disrupts, disturbs or impedes the orderly conduct of City business or which incites violence, including but is not limited to, unwelcome physical contact, or verbal, physical or emotional abuse or intimidation.
13. Cell phones, pagers, smart phones or other electronic communication devices shall be put in silence mode during meetings. Persons who need to place or receive a telephone call are requested to leave the chambers for that purpose.
14. Anything other than a prepared statement by the speaker and/or related supporting documents or items is prohibited at the podium.
15. Failure to comply with the rules of decorum which disturbs, disrupts or impedes the orderly conduct of the meeting shall, at the discretion of the presiding officer, be ruled out of order, and may result in the speaker's removal from the podium, removal from the meeting and/or possible arrest.