

City of Tucson Mayor and Council Meeting – Quick Guide

A. Background on Local Government and Mayor and Council Meetings

B. How to Participate in Mayor and Council Meetings

C. Tips for Writing Public Comments

The following information has been compiled by United Way of Tucson and Southern AZ staff using resources from City of Tucson websites and Tucson for Everyone – see links below.

A. Background on Local Government and Mayor and Council Meetings

Do you have a community concern?

- Is there a problem in your neighborhood such as speeding or graffiti?
- Do you wonder what activities are out there for kids to do after school?
- Do you want to know what recreation classes are available at your neighborhood center?
- Is a new park needed in your part of the city?
- Are you wondering what is being done about homelessness?
- Do the potholes on your street need repair?
- Are there questions about our city's operations that you want answers to?

Where do you go? Who do you talk to? You can get information by phone on the City's Information Line at 792-CITY, or, you may want to contact your elected representative. **The Tucson City Council helps address concerns that you may have about your neighborhood, your city, and the services provided by your local city government.**

How does the City of Tucson operate?

The City of Tucson is a Council-Manager form of government. The legislative body is comprised of the Mayor and six Council Members who are elected at-large. The legislative body establishes the policies for the city.

Once policies are set by the Mayor and Council, it is the job of the City Manager, his staff, and the city department directors to implement these policies as the executive body. The City Manager is selected by the Mayor and Council and is responsible for hiring all of the city department directors. The city attorney, the city clerk, and the city magistrates are also appointed by Mayor and Council. The magistrates are the judicial body in the City of Tucson.

How do I contact the Mayor or my Council Member (in general)?

You may contact the Council Member representing your ward or the Mayor by calling their office or writing a letter. In a brief letter, describe the problem or issue, provide your first and last name, a mailing address, and a daytime telephone number. You may be able to schedule a

meeting with your Council Member, the Mayor, or their aides to talk with them about the matter. Staff will be asked to research the matter to provide a response.

If you know that there are others who share your concern, they may call or write letters to these elected officials as well. For a complete listing of the city's elected officials and the addresses, telephone numbers, email addresses and fax numbers of the Mayor and Council offices, see the [Mayor and Council](#) web page.

The Mayor and each Council Member have a staff that assists in responding to the telephone calls, letters, and requests for information or service that come to their offices each day. See the [appropriate Council page](#) for a current listing of the staff members.

What is discussed at Mayor and Council meetings?

There are two agendas for each Mayor and Council meeting: the Study Session Agenda, and the Regular Session Agenda. The Regular Session Agenda contains the Consent Agenda. A Special Meeting may also be scheduled at the Council's request to discuss one or two topics of importance. Agendas can be viewed by visiting the [City Manager's Agenda Office](#) page.

During the Study Session, the Mayor and Council consider ideas proposed by staff, examine issues and problems facing Tucson, hear presentations relating to agenda items, decide how funds may be spent, and direct the City Manager and city staff to take specific action.

At the Regular Session, Mayor and Council may authorize [liquor licenses](#) for businesses and special events, approve rezonings, property acquisitions, or sales, proceed with annexations, approve or amend City of Tucson ordinances, or take other action.

The Mayor and Council also schedule **public hearings** to hear what the citizens of the community have to say about matters the council will vote on. **At a public hearing, speakers may voice opinions, concerns, or suggestions to the council.**

The public has the opportunity to address the city council on any topic for five minutes at Regular Session meetings during the "Call to the Audience" segment on the agenda.

At these meetings, the Mayor and Council follow an agenda which has a list of items to be discussed or voted on during the meeting. To review a current or past agenda, visit the [City Clerk's Office](#) web page." The agendas are typically finalized within the days before the meeting.

Source: <https://www.tucsonaz.gov/gov/frequently-asked-questions-faq-about-city-government>

B. How to Participate in Mayor and Council Meetings

The City of Tucson has a council-manager form of government. Policies are set by the Mayor and Council, who are elected by the people. Policies are carried out by the City Manager, who is appointed by the Mayor and Council. The Mayor and Council decides what is to be done; the City Manager, operating through the entire city staff, does it.

The Mayor and Council often schedules **public hearings on topics of interest (specifically listed on the agenda)**. Pursuant to Mayor and Council Rules and Regulations, public hearings last one hour. **Interested persons are invited to attend and offer comments. Additionally, Call to the Audience is reserved for comments from the public. This can be on any topic for five minutes.**

To address the Mayor and Council in person:

- Complete a speaker's card and deposit it in the tray on the podium. Upon being recognized, state your name and address before proceeding into your subject matter. Speakers are limited to three-minute presentations.
- Submit written comments to the Mayor and Council (via the City Clerk) prior to and during the meeting.
- If you'd like to submit a comment letter before the meeting, it should be sent to: cityclerk@tucsonaz.gov. The deadline is truly noon the day of the meeting, but it is highly suggested to send comments the day before. In the email you can ask the clerk to pass this information on to the mayor and council, or you can CC them all on the email too. Sending it in the day before ensures that everyone has time to review your comments.

Source: <https://www.tucsonaz.gov/gov/local-government-participation>

C. Tips for Writing Public Comments

If you want to participate in the call to the audience or a public hearing, here are some helpful tips:

Get to the meeting a little early to ensure that you have time to fill out your speaker card (bring a pen / pencil with you). There is typically someone there to help show you where the speaker cards are and where to drop them off once they are filled out. You don't have to write out what you want to say before, but you do only have 3 minutes to speak, so here are some helpful tips for writing your comments directly from [Tucson for Everyone](#). These tips apply to speaking during Call to the Audience as well as during the public hearings.

1. Think about one **person** (ideally you or someone you know)

Most Impact: When I think about why I support more housing, I think about my mother Ana who was a teacher for 37 years.

Less Impact: Stopping housing hurts the city's teachers.

Your perspective can move someone to see housing in a new light. There are people who have not yet **connected their values** to the **housing shortage**. Your audience is both the **decision-makers** and the **general public**. Draw the connection between **people they know** and **policy choices**!

2. Think about a **value**

Most Impact: More housing means a chance for LGBTQ people to find an accepting community.

Less Impact: More housing is good for people, the economy, and the environment.

Tips:

- Pick one value to focus on
- Make it specific
- Should be a value also shared by your audience
- Optional – include one statistic

3. Think about an **obstacle that person faces**

Most Impact: My partner Devin and I sat in our studio and ran the numbers over and over. We finally agreed that we couldn't afford kids. It has been devastating.

Less Impact: The lack of housing is affecting my family plans.

Tips:

- Something the person faces that could be fixed with more housing
- Include details
- Include emotions
- Doesn't need to be a sob story – "I'm lucky" is fine

4. Talk about why it's a **bigger problem**

Most Impact: Unfortunately, my story makes me supremely lucky. Millennials across the country are giving up on their dreams to own a home.

Less Impact: Here is a lengthy list of statistics about declining homeownership rates.

Tips:

- Values help us identify big problems
- Frames why lots of people, beyond the person you talked about, are at risk
- Optional – include one statistic
- "This is affecting so many"

5. Wrap up with a **call to action**

Most Impact: We can do more to protect people like my sister Jessica. By passing HB XX, we can change lives like hers.

No Impact: You all have not been doing your jobs taking care of our state's workers. You all are a disgrace!

- Your ask to the audience
- Keep it short and clear
- Suggested: use “we” statements
- Don’t accuse or blame
- “We can have inclusive housing policies”

Draft Your Comment! Use this in any order you want:

- Value about the topic (1-2 sentences)
- Specific person and their obstacle (4-8 sentences)
- Why it’s a bigger problem (1-2 sentences, max 1 statistic)
- Call to action (1-2 sentences)

Practice reading it out loud to get the timing down, share with a friend for feedback, and make sure that it includes specific details and a call to action.

Source: Tucson For Everyone - https://www.instagram.com/tucson_yimby/?hl=en