

Date: July 22, 2025

To: Government Operations and Efficiency Committee

From: Councilmember Kristina Duggan

Subject: Recommendations to Improve City Council Meeting Efficiency and Public Participation

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## **RECOMMENDATION**

Recommendation to request Government Operations and Efficiency Committee feedback and identify recommendations for City Council meeting efficiency and public participation including additional research, staff engagement, and further exploration to be brought back to the Committee for potential advancement to the full Council.

## **DISCUSSION**

As part of its workplan, the Government Operations & Efficiency (GOE) Committee is exploring ways to make City Council meetings more welcoming and accessible for the public. While the City Clerk's Office is currently conducting a survey to gather direct input from residents, this report focuses on smaller, nuanced, and cost-effective procedural changes that may not surface through public feedback but can still significantly improve how meetings function for the public. These adjustments aim to make agendas more predictable, reduce unnecessary delays, and enhance both public participation and operational efficiency.

### **Recommendations for Discussion**

#### **1. Establish Time-Certain Agenda Items**

**Problem:** Residents are often given 4-hour windows to speak for 90 seconds on high-interest items.

**Proposal:** Request the Mayor and City Manager to assign specific start times ("time certain") for selected items of interest to the public and allow Council offices to submit requests for these designations. Items designated as time-certain should be labeled on the supplemental agenda.

The Mayor would continue to chair the meeting and, in cases where flexibility is needed, the Mayor may override the time-certain designation. This maintains procedural integrity while allowing for adaptable meeting management.

Benefits:

- Reduces public and staff wait time.
- Provides predictability for high-interest items.
- Improves overall meeting time management.

## 2. Expand Early Public Comment

Problem: Only 10 non-agenda speakers are heard before regular business taking 30 minutes at the start of the meeting while the remaining speakers frequently wait until past 9:00pm.

Proposal: Allow up to 15 speakers at the start of each meeting to address non-agenda items. This approach enables more residents to share their concerns without waiting until the late evening and fosters broader participation by providing more equitable access to public comment.

The Council could also adopt amendments mirroring public comment for agenda items, which allows for the comment time to drop from 3 minutes to 90 seconds if more than 10 commenters.

Benefits

- Enables more residents to share concerns without waiting until late evening.
- Increases overall participation.
- Saves 7.5 minutes at the beginning of the meeting.

Current Ordinance

2.03.040(A)(8): Public Comment. The opportunity for members of the public to address the City Council on matters of public business which are not listed on the agenda but are within the subject matter jurisdiction of the City Council, which shall be conducted in accordance with the following rules:

- a. Each person desiring to address the City Council pursuant to this part of the order of business may, but is not required to, submit their name and the subject matter in writing to the City Clerk prior to the commencement of the Council meeting;
- b. All addresses to the City Council under this part shall be limited to three (3) minutes;
- c. The total number of speakers under this part shall be limited to the first ten (10) persons who have submitted their request to address the City Council on a matter not listed on the agenda in writing to the City Clerk;

- d. The total amount of time to be devoted to addresses under this part shall not exceed thirty (30) minutes unless said limit on the total amount of time is waived by consent of the City Council.

### 3. Uphold 5-Minute Limit on Ceremonials and Presentations

Problem: Ceremonial segments frequently stretch to 30–45 minutes, pushing policy items later.

Proposal: Reaffirm and uphold Municipal Code 2.03.040(A)(6), which limits City Council meetings to no more than three ceremonials or presentations per meeting, each lasting no more than five minutes. The City Clerk should display a timer and announce elapsed time to help manage time effectively.

- Keeps ceremonial items concise and focused.
- Preserves valuable agenda time for substantive policy discussions.
- Clerk announces elapsed time; the Mayor may allow extensions as appropriate.

Current Ordinance

2.03.040(A)(6): Ceremonials and Presentations. Ceremonials and presentations shall:

- a. Be limited to no more than three (3) ceremonials and/or presentations per City Council meeting; and
- b. Not exceed five (5) minutes per ceremonial or presentation.

### 4. Define “Urgency” for Supplemental Agenda Items

Problem: Using the supplemental agenda for non-urgent items gives residents less than 72 hours to prepare and make arrangements like securing childcare before the Council discussions.

Proposal: Request the City Attorney to draft a definition of “urgency” that will qualify supplemental agenda items. The definition should require any accompanying Statement of Urgency to show that the matter needs action before the next regular agenda, that delay would cause harm or a loss, and that the need is so pressing that temporarily limiting the usual opportunity for public and Councilmember engagement is warranted.

Adopting this clear standard will discourage casual use of the supplemental agenda that limits public engagement while still allowing genuinely urgent items to proceed under the existing three-member sign-on process.

Current Ordinances

2.03.040(A)(12) New business.

- a. A supplemental agenda item submitted by a Councilmember shall require a separate "Statement of Urgency" explaining why the item is urgent and is required to be added

after agenda is posted. If the City Council deems that a supplemental agenda item added onto the posted agenda is not urgent, the item shall be laid over to a future City Council meeting.

2.03.070(B): Subject to the relevant provisions of the Ralph M. Brown Act, no agenda item shall be heard or considered by the Council unless it is in writing, signed by the Councilmember, City officer, department director, or presiding officer of the body making the agenda request, and filed with the City Clerk prior to twelve noon (12:00) on the Monday the week before the meeting at which the agenda item is to be considered by the Council. Should a holiday occur on a Monday, the agenda item is then due prior to twelve noon (12:00) on the Friday preceding the Monday holiday. The requirement of this Subsection may be waived if a written communication is signed by three (3) Councilmembers and directed to the City Clerk requesting that a particular item be placed on an agenda for consideration and that communication is filed with the City Clerk before twelve noon (12:00) of the Friday immediately before the Tuesday at which such agenda item is to be considered.

#### 5. Amend "Divide by 9" Sponsorship Approval Process

Proposal: Routine, small-dollar community sponsorships add extra administrative work and crowd the council agenda with additional items.

Proposal: Explore allowing routine community sponsorships under \$5,000 to be approved at the staff level, bypassing individual City Council agenda items, while still maintaining public transparency of fund transfers. This change would speed delivery of small-dollar fund transfers, shorten agendas, and reduce Clerk processing time so meetings can focus on higher-priority policy matters.

#### Benefits

- Quicker community impact
- Less daunting agendas for easier review
- Efficiency with transparency

#### 6. Schedule Stand-Alone Study Sessions for Major Topics

Problem: Complex topics needing thorough discussion push the rest of the agenda into hurried late-night slots.

Proposal: Schedule dedicated study sessions for complex or high-impact issues instead of squeezing them into crowded agendas. Identify dates well in advance and reserve single-topic meetings for matters that demand comprehensive staff reports and in-depth discussion.

#### Benefits

- Enables deeper Council deliberation and community input on major policy questions.
- Gives staff, Council, and residents ample time to prepare and review materials.
- Keeps regular Tuesday meetings on schedule by lifting lengthy briefings off the main agenda.

**SUGGESTED ACTION**

Approve recommendation.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kristina Duggan", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kristina Duggan, Councilmember, Third District