City of La Crosse
Rules, Guidelines, and Decorum for Public Hearings

The purpose of public hearing is to gain information of fact and public opinion concerning an item of business before the Council. Public hearings may be held during standing committee meetings (J&A and F&P) and shall pertain to matters in each respective committee's hands. All statements shall be restricted to the subject matter and shall avoid personality.

Time Considerations

Public hearings shall be limited to 30 minutes when there are opposing viewpoints from the public. In the absence of opposing viewpoints, public hearings are limited to 15 minutes. Public hearing time limits may be extended by a majority vote of the committee. With respect to items that require a public hearing per federal, state, or local law, those matters shall not be subject to the same time limitations and shall be subject to reasonable limitations as approved by a majority of the committee. These items are marked “public hearing” on the agenda.

All speakers at a public hearing shall speak no more than three (3) minutes unless waived by the chair or a majority of the committee. Speakers may not give their time to other people. The chair shall call registered speakers to the podium in random order; excepting applicants and/or their agent who shall be given preference on the respective agenda item. Following each public speaker, the chair shall permit members of the Council to direct relevant questions to the speaker without initiating debate. Questions of the individual are not included in the time limitations.

Speakers shall sign up at least two (2) hours in advance of the meeting using the online submission form or by contacting the City Clerk and by providing name, municipality of residence, agenda item, position – support, oppose, neutral. Anyone registering to speak in person before the meeting should arrive early; sign ups close 10 minutes before the start of the meeting. Sign up instructions will be noted on meeting agendas.

Public Comment

Speakers are to address their remarks to the committee and not to other meeting participants or staff. The chair/speaker should refrain from back-and-forth exchanges.

Speakers must adhere to time limits. To be consistent and fair, a timer may be used.

The committee has the right to invite anyone to speak whom it wishes to hear from at other times than the public comment period. This is done by either unanimous consent or a majority vote.

Guidelines for Speakers

- When called, approach the speaker’s podium/microphone, and state your name and municipality of residence.
- If attending virtual, keep camera and microphone off until recognized by the chair. Once recognized, unmute your microphone to speak (camera optional for public).
- Keep comments relevant to the subject matter and as brief as possible trying not to duplicate information that has already been presented by another speaker.

Behavioral Expectations

Both the council members and the public should model courtesy and respect.

Do not interrupt the proceedings with applause, heckling, outbursts, or other disruptive behavior. Waiving of signs, flags or other items that may be disruptive is not allowed.

When attending virtually, limit your distractions to other participants when you are on camera (i.e. surroundings, moving about, eating, etc.).

Written Comments

In lieu of public comments, any person may provide written comment to the City Clerk which will be made a part of the legislative record.