

CITY OF UNALASKA
UNALASKA, ALASKA

RESOLUTION 2021-03

A RESOLUTION OF THE UNALASKA CITY COUNCIL ADOPTING A POLICY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT AT CITY COUNCIL MEETINGS

WHEREAS, public comment is an essential part of local government meetings; and

WHEREAS, the purpose of public comment is for members of the public to inform the City Council about their views; and

WEREHAS, guidelines for public comment are necessary for fairness and consistency; and

WHEREAS, because the format of City Council meetings has evolved to include participation via telephone and online platforms, additional guidelines are necessary to manage public comment for these participants in an orderly fashion.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the attached Policy for Public Comment at Meetings of the Unalaska City Council is hereby adopted.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by a duly constituted quorum of the Unalaska City Council on January ____, 2021.

Vincent M. Tutiakoff, Sr.
Mayor

ATTEST:

Marjie Veeder, CMC
City Clerk

MEMORANDUM TO COUNCIL

To: Mayor and City Council Members
From: Marjie Veeder, City Clerk
Through: Erin Reinders, City Manager
Date: January 26, 2021
Re: Resolution 2021-03: Adopting a policy for public comment at Council meetings

SUMMARY: Guidelines for public comment are recommended to preserve fairness and consistency for members of the public wishing to provide public comment. Additionally, with participation in Council meetings by telephone and online platforms increasingly common, further guidelines are necessary to manage public comment in an orderly fashion without undue disruption. The proposed public comment policy is consistent with our Code of Ordinances and has been developed with the assistance of the City Attorney.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION: Unalaska Code of Ordinances at § 2.20.020 provides numerous opportunities for public comments and participation at Regular Council Meetings: two opportunities for Community Input & Announcements, one near the beginning of the meeting and one near the end of the meeting; a separate time for Public Comment on Agenda Items; a separate time for items requiring public hearing by statute; and a period of public comment during council's discussion of each regular agenda item, provided the speaker has first notified the City Clerk of their intention to provide comment.

The presiding officer has at times set time limits for public comment.

Previous written policies about public comment at Council Meetings were not found.

Council discussed this item at their regular meeting on January 12, 2021; assigned three council members (Robinson, Coleman and Bell) to a committee to review and provide recommendations to the City Council; and postponed consideration of this item to January 26, 2021.

DISCUSSION: A policy providing guidelines for public comment is recommended so that both Council and members of the public know what to expect and to provide a framework for fairness and consistency. Participation in council meetings by telephone and online platforms emphasizes the need for such a policy to better manage public comment without unduly disrupting the meetings and allowing everyone to be heard who wishes to speak.

ALTERNATIVES: Council may choose to (a) adopt the policy as presented; (b) make amendments to the policy; (c) choose to appoint a committee to perform further study and make recommendations to council; or (d) choose not adopt a policy about public comment at council meetings.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS: Not applicable.

LEGAL: The City Attorney assisted in preparing the proposed policy.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends a written policy to provide guidelines for public comment at their meetings. This is council's policy and therefore a council decision.

PROPOSED MOTION: I move to adopt Resolution 2021-03.

CITY MANAGER COMMENTS: I support the Staff Recommendation. Staff is prepared to revise according to Council's feedback.

**UNALASKA CITY COUNCIL
POLICY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT
AT MEETINGS OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

Adopted by Resolution 2021-03 on _____

PURPOSE: The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for public comment at meetings of Unalaska City Council.

SCOPE: This policy applies to all Regular Meetings, Special Meetings and Work Sessions of the Unalaska City Council.

BACKGROUND: City Council meetings are designed for the Council to discuss and make decisions on various issues before the Council. A meeting of the City Council is held in public; it is not a “public meeting” in the sense of a public forum. The public does not participate in the decision-making process. Rather, the public provides input to the City Council, and Council takes the input into consideration in making decisions.

For Regular Meetings, Unalaska Code of Ordinances provides numerous opportunities for public comments and participation.

- a) Community Input & Announcements - § 2.20.020(A)(9) & (14): This is a time for members of the public to provide general information to council and to make announcements of interest to the community. This opportunity occurs twice, once early in the meeting and a second time immediately before the meeting adjourns. Advance notice or sign-up is not required, unless the speaker participates in the meeting by telephone or online.
- b) Public Testimony on Agenda Items - § 2.20.020(A)(10): This is a time for members of the public to provide information to Council regarding items listed on the agenda if the speaker does not wish to wait until the specific item comes up on the agenda. Advance notice or sign-up is not required, unless the speaker participates in the meeting by telephone or online.
- c) Public Hearing - § 2.20.020(A)(11): When an item requires public hearing by statute or ordinance, the presiding officer will open the public hearing for members of the public to provide comment. Advance notice or sign-up is not required, unless the speaker participates in the meeting by telephone or online.
- d) Public Comment during Council Discussion - § 2.20.020(B): This is an opportunity for public comments on agenda items in proximity to the Council’s discussion of the item. Members of the public must sign up in advance with the City Clerk in order to provide comment during this time.

Opportunities for public comment at special meetings will be provided in accordance with the agenda for that special meeting, which shall include public comment during council discussion.

Public comment during work sessions is allowed at the discretion of the presiding officer and members of the audience wishing to comment may raise their hand.

STATEMENT OF POLICY: The purpose of public comment is for citizens to provide information and inform the City Council about their opinions. The Mayor and City Council value community input and encourage participation in public comment opportunities at meetings of the City Council.

Public comment opportunities are not a time for members of the public to ask questions of, or engage in dialogue with the Mayor, City Council Members or City Staff. Community members are

encouraged to contact City Staff during normal business hours, or to contact the Mayor and City Council members directly.

These guidelines apply to all types of public comment opportunities described above.

1) Speakers are limited to three (3) minutes each, may not give their time to another person, and may speak about a single topic or agenda item only once during a meeting.

2) PUBLIC COMMENT IN PERSON

- a) Wait to be recognized by the presiding officer
- b) Use the microphone provided
- c) State your name
- d) Address all comments to the Mayor and City Council as a body, not to individual Council Members, the City Manager or others
- e) Comply with the 3-minute time limit
- f) If you wish to speak when an item appears on the regular agenda during council discussion, § 2.20.020(B), sign up in advance with the City Clerk

3) PUBLIC COMMENT BY TELEPHONE CONFERENCE OR ONLINE PLATFORMS

- a) In order to promote an orderly meeting, all persons participating by telephone conference or online platforms must sign up with the City Clerk at least one hour in advance of the start of the meeting, providing the speaker's name and telephone number or online identifier. By necessity, this requirement applies to all opportunities for public comment for persons participating by telephone or online.
- b) At the appointed time, the speaker will be allowed to un-mute
- c) Wait to be recognized by the presiding officer
- d) State your name
- e) Address all comments to the Mayor and City Council as a body, not to individual Council Members, the City Manager or others
- f) Comply with the 3-minute time limit

4) WRITTEN COMMENT

- a) Written comment shall be submitted to the City Clerk's Department no later than one hour prior to the start of the meeting, to be read into the record by the City Clerk or presiding officer's designee
- b) Written comment is accepted by e-mail, regular mail, fax or hand delivery
- c) The name of the person providing written comment must be included
- d) Because written comment will be read during the meeting, it must comply with 3-minute time limit