**How to Provide Effective Testimony at a Public Meeting**

The City of Phoenix encourages public involvement in City government. One way that many citizens take advantage of is the opportunity to speak or testify at one of the City’s many public meetings. The City Council meetings, as well as the City’s board and commission meetings (such as the Planning Commission and Parks Commission), are all public meetings and provide time on their agendas for public comment. Additionally, these public bodies may hold meetings specifically to provide the public the opportunity to discuss specific issues.

Public speaking can be challenging, but there are ways to make it easier. Consider attending a public meeting to familiarize yourself with the procedure, especially the process for public testimony. Attending a meeting will also give you the opportunity to hear the public comments or testimony of other citizens. Use the information below to help make your testimony easier and more effective.

**Practical Information:**

Most committees meet in the Public Works building at 1000 S. B Street. Information about the City’s public meetings, including times, meeting locations, and agendas, can be found on the City’s website at www.phoenixoregon.gov.

A sign-in sheet is provided for members of the public to fill out if they are interested in speaking. If you are interested in speaking, you should do the following:

* **Sign in** before the meeting, noting what agenda item you wish to speak about.
* **Step forward** and sit at the table in front of the dais when the committee chair calls your name or asks if there are any members of the public present who wish to speak.
* **Introduce yourself**, giving your name and address (if you are representing a group or business, you should identify the organization).
* State or introduce the issue on which you are speaking.
* **Do not speak unless recognized by the Chairman.** Members of the audience may not speak unless they have been recognized by the Chairman and are seated to provide testimony.

**General Tips for your Testimony:**

* **Prepare:** The time limit for public statements or testimony is usually 3 minutes. The time limits may be more or less depending on the number of people who wish to speak. Practice your testimony beforehand to make sure you can do it in three minutes.
* **Know your facts:** Whether speaking during the public comment period or a public hearing, know the facts of the case upon which you wish to testify. Contact the appropriate department in City Hall if you have questions about the topic about which you are testifying.
* **Address the Approval Criteria** related to that particular application or decision. The approval criteria are the basis on which the application is reviewed and/or judged. The approval criteria that are applicable to the issue about which you are speaking are listed in the staff report. Testimony must address how a proposal is or is not consistent with the approval criteria in order to be considered.
* **Write out your statement or testimony:** Many people who testify do so from written notes. Writing out your testimony can help to organize it and may reduce some of the emotion that you might feel about the topic or issue.
* **State your position:** Clearly state the issue, your position on that issue, and what you would like the committee to do. Offer solutions to the situation(s) or issue(s) you are speaking about. Be courteous and professional to the committee and others during your statement or testimony.
* **Be concise:** Hearings on controversial matters may last for several hours. A clearly presented, concise presentation can be very forceful. Presentations that are disorganized and drag on will not hold the attention of the people listening to your testimony.
* **Listen** to the testimony of others who speak before you and try not to repeat what they have said (you can simply testify that you “support the testimony that has just been given”).