

City of Underwood

Policy on Open Forum & Public Comment

The Underwood City Council wishes to give everyone an opportunity to be heard on matters not currently before the Council. As such, the Council has set aside a period for public comment near the beginning of each Council meeting, called “Open Forum”.

“Open Forum” provides an opportunity to be heard and is not normally an opportunity to debate an issue.

Public comment is encouraged and appreciated. With the exception of public hearings, this is the only opportunity for the public to address the City Council on agenda items or any other City-related business. In order to accomplish all business on the agenda and be respectful of everyone’s time, Council members will not be able to engage in dialogue with individual members of the audience and no immediate action will be taken on any public comment issue.

Rules of conduct

1. During the “Open Forum” portion of the Council meeting, the Mayor will call you forward when it’s your turn to speak, all persons wishing to address the Council shall approach the podium when recognized by the Mayor and clearly state their name, address, and subject being addressed.
2. Generally, a time period of no more than 15 minutes is reserved for public comment, with each speaker receiving a three-minute time limit. Each speaker should observe this timeframe and plan their remarks accordingly. **No speaker may convey or donate his or her time to another speaker.**
3. Each speaker will be permitted to address the Council once during the meeting, unless all other persons desiring to speak have had the opportunity to do so and the Mayor determines that sufficient time remains to permit speakers a second opportunity to address the Council.
4. Speakers shall address all statements and questions to the mayor. The Mayor, in turn, will refer any questions or research requests to staff.
5. Speakers should strive to provide only factual information and refrain from repeating comments made by other speakers.
6. After everyone in the audience wishing to speak has given their comments, or at the end of the allotted time for public comments, the Mayor shall close the “Open Forum” portion of the meeting. At this time, discussion shall be limited to the Council and staff unless the Mayor requests the speaker to assist the Council.
7. The Council does not take action on items brought up under “Open Forum” so they may allow time to thoroughly research the respective matter(s) and provide a measured and fair response. Matters raised may be referred to staff and a response, if necessary, will be provided to the speaker. If a matter will need to be brought back

to the Council at a future meeting, staff will notify the speaker at such time that a meeting date has been determined.

8. Comments shall be courteous and respectful at all times, conduct oneself with respect and civility towards others and otherwise abide by Council policy. No person may use public comment for the purpose of campaign or advertisement. Please refrain from conversations with others during the meeting and shouting from the audience will not be allowed.
9. Should a member or members of the audience be identified as disorderly, the Mayor has the right to declare the meeting temporarily recessed and call for the removal of said person(s) from the premises.
10. Persons not recognized by the mayor should refrain from commenting, interrupting a speaker at the podium, conducting conversation with other members of the audience, or creating any other type of disruption that might distract a member of the Council, city staffer, or a speaker at the podium.
11. No person shall display signs or placards, applaud participants in debate or engage in conversation or other behavior which may disrupt the proceedings of the Council.
12. When a group of persons wishes to address the Council on the same subject matter, they may choose a spokesperson to address the governing body. No action will be taken in response to a petition delivered at a Council meeting. Petitions will be placed on file and referred to the appropriate staff for consideration and recommendation of appropriate action.
13. The same rules of conduct noted in this policy shall also apply to members of the audience wishing to address the Council during any scheduled public hearing.

Dated this 8th day of May 2023.

ATTEST: _____

Anna Kiser, Mayor

Judy Everett, City Clerk/Treasurer