

City Managers Corner

Raise my hand! I have something to say! Do you ever feel like the kid in the back row? Do you think no one wants to hear your opinion, thoughts, or concerns? Regardless of what you may or may not have heard, read, or thought, the city DOES want to hear what you have to say about decision-making and council agenda items. When we say we didn't hear from anyone, it's not a derogatory comment, it's a fact. When we don't hear from you, then we can only assume that you are okay with it. It is your right to speak. But remember we have rules to follow.

The council establishes rules of procedure, and the State of Texas has laws. No matter how much we want to bend, we can't. You can always speak at a City Council Meeting and per the Council's rules of procedure, you have three minutes to speak on any topic before AND during the agenda item if you sign up in advance. On agenda items, if you sign up, you can present your information when the item is called. The disconnect comes when the subject you wish to speak on is NOT on the agenda, in that case, we CANNOT have a conversation publicly back and forth because it violates the Texas Open Meetings Act. If you ask a question publicly about an item that is not on the agenda, expect to hear crickets, we won't be able to answer you. Remember, the Mayor is the presider of the meeting and makes the final decision on communication at the meeting.

The open meetings law provides for public comment though, not public dialogue. There are other ways to have one-on-one dialogue. You can always contact your city council members directly. Their contact information is on our website. You may schedule a meeting with me by contacting my assistant Nicole. (Please be patient, my calendar is booked up weeks in advance) I know that people are busy, and I have been known to meet after hours if the need arises. For the last 18 months, we have worked hard on our image, our customer service presence, and our willingness and ability to listen, speak, and assist. If you haven't been to city hall lately, we recommend you do, we promise you will see a difference.

At the end of the day, we are not tyrants or monsters, and we all live here, me, my family, and our councilmembers, so everything we do or don't do affects us too, so we care, and we want what is best for Palacios as a whole, not for personal gain or notoriety. We preach equality across the city limits, and we strive to help all no matter who you are or where you are from. We will even get a translator if that is needed. Just remember, we should always treat others as we wish to be treated, and we strive to be kinder than we feel, but if you feel otherwise, drop me a line and we will address it, I am sure many in the community can vouch that I have and will.

Recently we were posed with the question as to why we do not allow citizens to be heard over the Zoom meeting link. Believe me, we have talked about this at length over the months since we began live streaming our meetings, and we needed to get to a consensus on how to move forward. It's not that we didn't want to, we want to do it right. Patience is a virtue in a small town and with so many things happening so fast, we needed a chance to breathe and think. We feel we have a solution, and we are going to have our first inaugural Zoom citizens forum at our next city council meeting on Thursday, July 13. If you wish to speak, we ask that you arrive in the Zoom meeting room no later than 15 minutes prior to the start of the meeting, click your hand raise button, and send a message to the meeting room about the topic you would like to speak on, and when it comes time, you will get your three minutes, just like those present in person. We kindly ask that you sign in to Zoom with your real name if you want to speak, this helps us to help you better.

Economic Development Corporation meetings will begin live streaming on Zoom in August with the ability to speak during public forums as well.

With that being said, the next two paragraphs are for our friends in legal:

Government Code subsection 551.007(b) requires certain governmental bodies to permit public comment on an item on the agenda for an open meeting either before or during the body's consideration of the item. A governmental body may satisfy subsection 551.007(b)'s requirements by holding a single public comment period at the beginning of an open meeting to address all items on the agenda.

Government Code subsection 551.007(c) authorizes a governmental body subject to its provisions to adopt reasonable rules regarding the public's right to address the body, including time limitations. Pursuant to subsection 551.007(c), a governmental body may adopt a rule capping the total amount of time a member of the public has to address all items on the agenda if the rule is reasonable.

Have a great week and if we can do anything to help, please call and ask for Aleigha, our City Secretary, Nicole, my assistant, or me. (361) 972-3605