

ITEM#: 25
DATE: 09-12-23
DEPT: ADMIN

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: PUBLIC MEETING DECORUM STANDARDS

BACKGROUND:

On March 22, 2022, the City Council requested that a memo from staff be placed on a future Council agenda regarding standards for decorum at public meetings. Having a clear set of rules in place for conduct at meetings ensures: 1) that participant expectations have been made clearly known, and 2) that follow-up actions can be taken to address behaviors that violate these expectations, if necessary.

On August 8, 2023, staff presented a proposed set of standards to the City Council. The City Council provided feedback which required modifications to be made. The attached list contains the proposed standards as revised by the City Council at that meeting.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Adopt the attached Standards for Decorum for public meetings.
2. Modify the attached Standards for Decorum.
3. Do not approve Standards for Decorum for public meetings.

CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Public participation in decision-making is an important aspect of government in Ames. The proposed Standards for Decorum emphasize the need to respect other participants in public meetings. In maintaining a respectful and constructive discussion, the goal is that community members with interest in City business will be welcome to participate in the process. Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council adopt Alternative No. 1, as described above.

City of Ames Public Meeting Standards for Decorum

The Ames City Council is committed to respectful, participatory dialogue regarding issues facing the community. In City Council meetings and other City proceedings, it is expected that members of the public respect one another by following these standards for decorum:

1. The time for each speaker may be limited at the discretion of the Chairperson to ensure an opportunity for each person to be heard. Please conclude your remarks before the time limit has been reached. Unless permitted by the Chairperson, it is only allowed for each speaker to offer remarks once per agenda item.
2. Remarks should be focused on matters of City policy and City business. At no time is it appropriate to use profane, obscene, or slanderous language, or to engage in personal attacks against City officials or members of the public.
3. To ensure an orderly discussion, comments should be delivered from the podium and addressed to the City Council dais, not the gallery (audience). It is not appropriate to speak from the gallery or to applaud or make other gestures that interfere with the proceedings, unless invited by the meeting chair to do so.
4. The public may approach the dais only for the purpose of passing materials to City staff for distribution around the dais.
5. Audience members may stand so long as they are not obstructing the view of others or interfering with the ability of others to participate in the meeting. At no time is it appropriate to stand on tables or chairs.
6. To ensure other attendees and broadcast viewers are able to see the proceedings, signs and posters are permitted if they are held in a manner that does not obstruct others' views of the proceedings. Signs and posters may not contain profane, obscene, or slanderous content, or content that personally attacks a City official or member of the public. If a speaker wishes to refer to a drawing or text, they may request that a staff person place the document on the projector during the discussion.
7. Attendees are not required to wear formal attire. However, it is expected that clothing and footwear are worn, and that they are worn in a manner that is respectful of the proceedings and of others. Attire must be worn so as to not distract from, interfere with, or obstruct the proceedings or other attendees.
8. Out of respect to all, mobile phones and other devices must be silenced. Side conversations during meetings should be avoided. If you have to engage in a conversation or answer a call, please step into the hallway.
9. The Chairperson has discretion to interpret and enforce these standards and may announce modifications to them as necessary to ensure orderly proceedings.