

How to Submit Public Comment at Chicago's City Council

Chicago's City Council allows public comment at all of its meetings, including meetings of its committees. There are multiple ways to submit public comment, but each has a specific application process and limited window of time for those applications.

Our guide provides details on the current policies for public comment. Additional information can be found on the [city clerk's "About City Government"](#) web page.

Public Comment at City Council

Public comment at a City Council meeting can be made in three ways, each with its own time constraints. See the individual sections below for details on how to register as a public commenter for each method, but keep in mind:

- In-person public comment can be made by entering City Hall's Washington Street entrance on the morning of a City Council meeting. Because many people frequently line up to attend, arriving at least an hour early is strongly recommended.
- Remote public comment via phone can only be made by calling and leaving a message with the automated registration phone number between 12:01 a.m. on the Monday before a council meeting and 8 a.m. on the day before the meeting, and then answering a confirmation call from the sergeant-at-arms' office between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. on the day before the meeting.
- Written public comment must be submitted via email between 8 a.m. and 9 a.m. on the day of the meeting.

In-Person Public Comment

During each City Council meeting, 30 minutes is dedicated to public comment. Public comment is limited to three minutes per speaker, for a maximum of 10 speakers (although sometimes more names will be called due to no-shows).

With the lifting of some COVID-19 restrictions, City Council now uses a hybrid verbal comment system that allows for both in-person and online speakers. Speaking time is divided equally between the two, with five in-person speakers and five remote speakers selected for each meeting.

In-person commenters must enter City Hall from the Washington Street entrance (south side of the building) and inform the sergeant-at-arms' staff that they wish to submit public comment during the City Council meeting. **Arriving AT LEAST an hour early is strongly recommended.** There is no separate line for public commenters, and the line to attend a City Council meeting can be long. Each person requesting to provide in-person public comment will be asked to fill out a form, and five speakers are be selected at random from those forms.

Remote Public Comment

The process for remote public comment requires answering a call from the sergeant-at-arms' office when they reach out, and is **not recommended for individuals who cannot reliably answer their phone between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. on a Tuesday.**

Requests to provide remote public comment may be made from 12:01 a.m. the Monday before the scheduled meeting until 8 a.m. on the day before the scheduled meeting,

Requests must be made by calling 312-744-6800 and leaving a voice message with the speaker's name and telephone number. Participants are selected at random from all the submitted speakers.

Between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. on the day before the scheduled meeting (which is usually a Tuesday, since City Council meetings are scheduled for Wednesdays except for occasional special meetings), the sergeant-at-arms' office will call each selected participant at the telephone number provided to confirm attendance and give the telephone number and passcode needed to access the meeting. Only one attempt to contact is made; if there is no live response, the selection is forfeited, and the sergeant-at-arms will move on to the next selected participant.

If selected and confirmed, speakers must call the number provided and use the passcode to access the meeting at 10 a.m. on the day of the City Council meeting. (Unless otherwise directed by the sergeant-at-arms's office during the

confirmation call, which may happen in the occasional case of special meetings with different start times.)

Written Public Comment

In addition to the three-minute spoken comment options above, members of the public may also submit up to two pages of written comment on any matter before City Council to public_comments@cityofchicago.org.

Written comments may only be submitted between 8 a.m. and 9 a.m. on the day of the scheduled meeting, and will be provided to the alderpersons at the meeting and retained afterwards by the city clerk's office.

Public Comment at Committee Meetings

Currently, most committee meetings are still being held by videoconference and only allow remote public comment. The city clerk's office does not have a posted policy for in-person public comment.

Remote Public Comment at Committee Meetings

Requests to submit remote public comment must be made between 10 a.m. two business days before the scheduled meeting and 9 a.m. the business day before the scheduled meeting.

To submit remote public comment at a meeting of a City Council committee, participants must call 312-744-6800 and leave a voice message with their name and telephone number. Participants will be selected at random from all the submitted speakers.

Between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. on the day before the scheduled meeting, the sergeant-at-arms' office will call each selected participant at the telephone number provided to confirm attendance and give the telephone number and passcode needed to access the meeting. Only one attempt to contact is made; if there is no live response, the selection is forfeited, and the sergeant-at-arms will move on to the next selected participant.

If selected and confirmed, speakers must call the number provided and use the passcode to access the meeting at its scheduled start time on the day of the meeting.

Written Public Comment at Committee Meetings

Individual committees will list the email contact and allowed window of time on the public meeting notice for each committee meeting.

Upcoming meetings and their notices and agendas can be found on the [City Clerk's Legistar website](#).

Contact Your Alderperson

As regular council-watchers know, the attention paid by alderpersons on the floor to the in-person public comment can be - to put it mildly - varying. Side conversations, absences from the floor and preparation for the next items on the agenda often distract from the public speakers. The three-minute cutoff also substantially limits the amount of detail that can be provided.

On issues where individuals or organizations feel strongly, the Better Government Association recommends reaching out to legislators directly via their ward office, in addition to any written or verbal public comment. Different ward offices track constituent outreach in different ways, but most alderpersons are more attentive to direct contact from their own residents than they are to public comment at City Council and committee meetings.

Ward office contact information for each alderperson can be found on the [city clerk's Legistar website](#). Many ward offices pay for and maintain their own websites and staff, so it may also be helpful to Google your individual representative and look for listed contact information on their website. Each ward is run slightly differently, so it can take some experimenting to find the best way of contacting your alderperson.