



# Public Comment Reference Sheet

The Town welcomes participation in all its public meetings. When you feel strongly about a public issue or a local concern, the council encourages you to attend meetings and share your information and thoughts with them. Here are some tips to help you participate.

## How to make a public comment

- Arrangements for a sign language interpreter, hearing assistance, and other assistance can be made by contacting the Town Clerk at [clerk@fridayharbor.org](mailto:clerk@fridayharbor.org) or by calling 360-378-2810 the 48 hours prior to the meeting.
- If you are unable to attend a meeting or would rather not give testimony at the meeting, you may send an email with your thoughts. Emails or letters received by the clerk at least three hours prior to the beginning of a meeting will be provided to the council and included in the official record.
- You do not need to sign up in order to speak at a meeting. The mayor will open the public comment period and invite speakers to step forward. Those attending by Zoom will also be given the opportunity to comment. \*
- When invited to speak, step to the podium or unmute your microphone and identify yourself by stating your name and whether you are a resident of the town. Be sure to speak clearly.
- You will be given **three minutes to speak**. This limitation allows the council to hear as many different viewpoints as possible in the limited time available. You may not yield any portion of your time to another speaker. \*
- A **group of speakers may have five minutes** to comment if a single representative is commenting on behalf of the group.
- Your comments are to be addressed to the council and may not be of a personal nature.
- You may address any item or concern with the exception of topics scheduled for a public hearing. You must reserve those comments until the public hearing (see Public Hearings below).
- If previous speakers have already made the point you wish to make, please identify yourself and indicate your agreement with what has already been said rather than repeating the comment.
- While other speakers are at the podium, do not disrupt proceedings by speaking out, clapping, booing, etc.
- Don't be surprised when the council does not respond to your comment as they are not permitted to do so. The purpose of the public comment period is for you to freely address the council and not for the council to engage in dialog.

\*If attendance is high and public comment is likely to exceed 30 minutes, a public comment sign-up sheet may be implemented. The mayor and council may make a motion to adjust the speaking times down to two minutes to allow more members of the public to participate. Priority is given to in person commentators.

## How to present your comment

There are no rules on how you present your comments, but these tips could help you organize your thoughts.

**Point:** What is the idea you wish to present? Begin with an "I statement" outlining your idea such as, "I am here to (support/oppose) ..."

**Reason:** Why are you making this point? This is an important step, so the listener does not make assumptions about your motives.

**Example:** Give brief and relevant examples to clarify your point and make it concrete.

**Summary:** What condition will be changed or improved if your point is adopted?

**Action:** What needs to be done and who should do it?

## Public hearings

A public hearing offers a formal opportunity to provide your views to the council about the hearing issue. You will follow the same guidelines for speaking during the regular public comment period and may submit written comments to the clerk at least three hours prior to the beginning of the meeting during which the public hearing is being held. Here is additional useful information:

- When you address the council during a public hearing, the council members, staff and audience will remain silent. After the last person has spoken, the hearing will be closed. The council will then discuss, and often decide on, the issue.
- The audience may not comment during the council's deliberations unless a council member requests more information from a speaker.
- The council may continue the public hearing to a future meeting. The public comment period will not be reopened at that meeting except in rare circumstances and at the council's sole discretion. Reasons for potentially reopening the comment period include discovery of new and significant information or errors in the original notice or process.