

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT TOOL - CITY COUNCIL

PROVIDED BY ALEXIS EDGHILL-WHALEN OF HEALTHY PLANNING 4 HEALTHY CITIZENS

Want to get in touch with your local city council on a certain concern or issue? Here are some tips to get you started.

STEP ONE: FIND YOUR CITY WEBSITE AND LOOK FOR "CITY HALL"

STEP TWO: FIGURE OUT WHAT YOU WANT TO SAY

What do you want? _____

How does this connect with a personal insight or experience? _____

Find and connect your concern to a supportive policy: _____

When would you like to see this addressed? _____

What are the priorities for action?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Why does this matter to you and your community? _____

STEP THREE: HOW DO YOU WANT TO MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD?

Do you want to write a letter, have a personal meeting or attend a city council meeting? The following pages provide tips on the three options.

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SAMPLE LETTER

Hello my name is: _____

I am a constituent in: _____

I am very concerned about: _____

This matters to me/my family/community because: _____

I've noticed the policy of the city/town is: _____

I'd like to hear back from you by: _____

Sincerely, _____

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PERSONAL MEETING

It's a good idea to prepare for a personal meeting. You can do this by considering and writing out your ideas beforehand. Here are some questions to get you started.

1. What are you asking for?
2. What are you willing to say YES to?
3. What timeline are you looking for?

Be reasonable, researched, responsible with your word and respectful.

IN-PERSON DEPUTATION (ALSO CALLED A DELEGATION) TO YOUR COUNCIL

What you need to know when you speak in front of the council:

- You need to register in advance.
- You will have approximately 5 minutes to speak.
- You may be asked questions.
- You need to speak to a specific agenda item.
- One speaker is generally considered a representative of hundreds of others who were unable to make time for the meeting.

THE POWER OF TEN

Join with other concerned citizens if you can. 10 people representing 10 different lived experiences have a greater impact than 100 people from the same background. 10 letters of original material are far more memorable than hundreds of form emails or automated petition emails.

SOCIAL MEDIA & MEDIA

Use social media to celebrate a positive meeting with your elected representative. Or to hold them accountable for what was agreed upon. Focus on policy discussions, not personalities wherever possible. Shaming on social media is the fastest way to never have another opportunity to meet again. Give your elected official a chance to work with you.

Going to the press/media is a last resort tactic. You are not guaranteed to get the last word. You could lose control of the narrative. In a complex situation, your story may get oversimplified.

Reporters are always looking for interesting local stories to tell but you must be willing to make yourself available for their tight timelines and also to invest in making the story easy for them to conceptualize and communicate in a short column.

It's also a good idea to alert local media to attend Council meetings when you or a group of citizens will be presenting on an issue of concern to the wider community.