



City of Arts & Innovation

News Release

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New Format Will Allow More Public Comment at Virtual Meetings

Change is effective with May 12 City Council meeting

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – The City of Riverside is making changes to how it facilitates comments from the public during virtual meetings, starting with a City Council meeting on May 12.

Members of the public will once again be able to speak for three minutes during the public comment portion of the meeting, and on other items. In previous meetings held since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, members of the public were able to speak for five minutes at the beginning of the meeting on any topic on the agenda.

The change will create more opportunities for members of the public to speak, and an opportunity to speak on a topic just before the governing body begins deliberating on that topic. Options for speaking include general public comment, a workshop, items on the discussion calendar, a public hearing, and items removed from the consent calendar.

“This is the latest evolution in our ongoing effort to ensure residents have the ability to address their government during these unique circumstances,” Mayor Rusty Bailey said. “I am pleased that our constituents will once again have multiple opportunities to speak at each meeting, as they did when meetings were in the Council chambers.”

When Riverside switched to virtual meetings on March 31, shortly after the declaration of a local emergency, “drive-up public comment” was conducted in the parking lot outside City Hall. Residents could drive or walk up to a camera and speak to the City Council about specific items on the agenda.

The following week, on April 7, the City switched to a phone call-in system, which did not require people to come to City Hall. That process, with a five-minute, one-time public comment at the beginning of the meeting, has been in place since.

Moving forward, anyone who wishes to speak should call the live meeting public comment line -- (951) 826-8600 – at the appropriate time during the meeting. The best way to determine when to call is

by watching the meeting via engageriverside.com, RiversideTV cable channels, or City social media live feeds.

Residents who do not wish to call in can continue to make their comments by email, through the e-comment function at engageriverside.com or by sending a card or letter.

“Input from the community is crucial to good decision-making,” Mayor Pro Tem Erin Edwards said. “I am encouraged that, even though we are meeting virtually, the public can still share their ideas and expertise.”

Calls will be answered in the order in which they are received. Hold times may vary dependent upon call volume. Callers may be asked to call back later when the item they are interested in is being heard.

Callers are asked to mute whatever device on which they are using to watch the meeting to prevent an echo. Members of the body you are addressing -- City Council, board or commission -- will hear your comments, but will not be able to directly respond.

This is not a phone number to address the Riverside County Board of Supervisors.

For the latest information and resources regarding COVID-19 -- www.RiversideCA.gov/COVID-19