
CITY OF ROCHESTER HILLS

Clerk's
Office

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DATE: September 28, 2006

TO: AIS Committee Members

RE: Suggestions from Mr. Dave Kibby
re: City Council Rules &
Procedures [LF#2006-0119]

Attached are suggestions that were received from Mr. Dave Kibby. He may be in attendance at the October AIS meeting for discussion.

If you have any questions, please contact me.

Thanks.

Those wishing to communicate

There are two different kinds of comments;

1. Specific to something on the agenda
2. General

There are two different groups a speaker wishes to address;

1. The Mayor and or Council members
2. The public

People wishing to have their opinions regarding items on the agenda heard by the Mayor or Council need to be heard at the time the item is being discussed.

Speeches general in nature or where the speaker wishes to get a message to the public are less time sensitive and could be scheduled in a different way. These could be done off site with clear rules limiting the subject matter, reviewed by a committee, and televised at a pre determined time each week.

Another possibility would be to have a Public Comment page on the web site where e-mails are posted for a set period of time. This might encourage communication between homeowners as well as between Council members and homeowners. This would save a lot of time at Council meetings.

Because Council members have had to deal with speakers who are discourteous, or worse, they have set standards that do not allow for any City officials to be badgered, harassed, or verbally attacked. This rule must be followed by Council members as well and there needs to be a procedure in place to penalize those who repeatedly attempt to do so.

Public Comment Portion of Council Meeting

The long term *goal* is to increase communication *between* the residence of Rochester Hills and the members of City Council by having their thoughts shared at televised Council Meetings.

Those wishing to communicate *to* their Council members are presently attempting to do so in five different ways.

1. *E-mails* directed to one or more Council member that the sender would like to have read to the Council and the public by someone else.
2. *Phone calls*. Considered private communication.
3. Those who come before Council and read a *prepared speech* that they would rather have someone else read for them.
4. Those who come before Council and have *no written speech* and who prefer to speak themselves. No option need be considered for this group.
5. These who wish to communicate but have *not yet done so*.

Things to be required of a speech;

- Time limit.
- Acceptable language and courteous tone.
- The source for *claimed facts* should be provided by the writer of the speech to be confirmable by Council if it so wishes. This should apply to all written communications if the writer wishes their comments to be considered.

The largest number of voters presently communicating to the Council, but wishing their thoughts could be made public, is from category 1. This number is so large that having someone read them all is unworkable even though reading them seems the only reasonable way to get them out to the public.

Some suggestions for what would be accepted;

- The first (you pick a **number**) received by the Clerks office by the day prior to a meeting.
- A person would have to be present for their speech to be read. This would allow for any unclear statements to be cleared up without delay.
- Pre recordings could be considered but could present unforeseen problems.

We won't know how many of those who haven't yet tried to communicate will attempt to do so until we make it easier for them.

A two way communication requires a way for members of Council to respond to public comments from voters.

Things to consider;

- An **immediate response** by a random member of Council.
- A **delayed response** which would give members of council time to think about what should be said and who should say it. It could be done after a break or even the next meeting.
- **Harsh responses** will have a negative effect on speakers, thus reducing the numbers who wish to speak.
- **Not challenging** false claims will be considered by many as having accepted them as true.
- Any facts presented as true should be **challengeable** by two or more Council members agreeing to the challenge. Challenged facts should be reviewed at the next televised meeting by repeating what was claimed and what your response is.

The rules determining when a speaker (in person or substitute) may be turned away must be made clear to both the “speaker” and the person with authority to turn them away.

Things to consider;

- Printed rules should be available on the Cities web sight and at the entrance to the Council Chamber.
- A person that was denied his or her chance to speak, and who disagrees with the decision, should have a way to challenge the decision. I suggest an uneven number greater than two Council members judge the challenge. If it is determined the “speaker” was wrongfully turned away, he or she should return the next televised meeting to represent their thoughts and it be made clear that the challenge was found to be valid. A public apology should be made.

My Suggestions

- The number of speeches you will accept per meeting should be determined.
- Anyone who wishes to speak in person should have priority over those wishing to have their speeches read for them.
- *Speakers* should be allowed to speak on a subject of their choosing.
- The rules should include all the regular things like language, length of speech, and politeness as well as making the sources for the writer's claims of fact available for conformation. If they are found to be untrue, obvious unconfirmable claims can and should be announced at a future meeting, preferable, the next. We wish to communicate, not simply accept untrue statements as fact.
- The rules should be printed and be made available on the Cities web sight and at City Hall.
- All speeches must be typed in a readable font and size.
- A speaker, or reader, other than a Council member, should be available to those who are present at the meeting but who wish not to give their own speech. A family member of anyone physically unable to attend should qualify as a valid substitute. The speeches should be made available to that person early enough (15 to 30 min.?) for them to pre read so any questions about what the writer meant can be cleared up. Not so a judgment can be made! Those not offering sources to be checked will be turned down as well as those considered too lengthy or unreadable.
- Directly after all speeches have been presented, Council members should be able to make *constructive* comments, **not argumentative**, about what was said.
- Speakers who feel they have been slighted should be able to protest in writing. If three or more Council members agree with them, they should be given a public apology and a chance to represent their thoughts at a later date.

If trust must be earned, then so must *distrust*! Most voters are undecided because they don't know you well enough to make a decision. This should help!

Presented by David Kibby