



SPEAK UP!

From time to time, you and your neighbors may become concerned enough about an issue in your neighborhood, or some other matter, to speak up about it in public.

In Medford and throughout Oregon, most public decisions concerning land use, zoning, budgeting, the enactment or change of laws, and many other matters, are required to go through a public hearing. Notices of public hearings are published in the newspaper, and in the case of some land use and zoning decisions, individual property owners in the area are mailed a notice.

So, when you finally get motivated to speak up about something, do so! That is the purpose of the public hearing. **But don't waste your testimony!**

Following are some suggestions for making the most of your opportunity to get the attention of decision makers, like the City Council, Planning Commission, or other decision making bodies, at a public hearing .

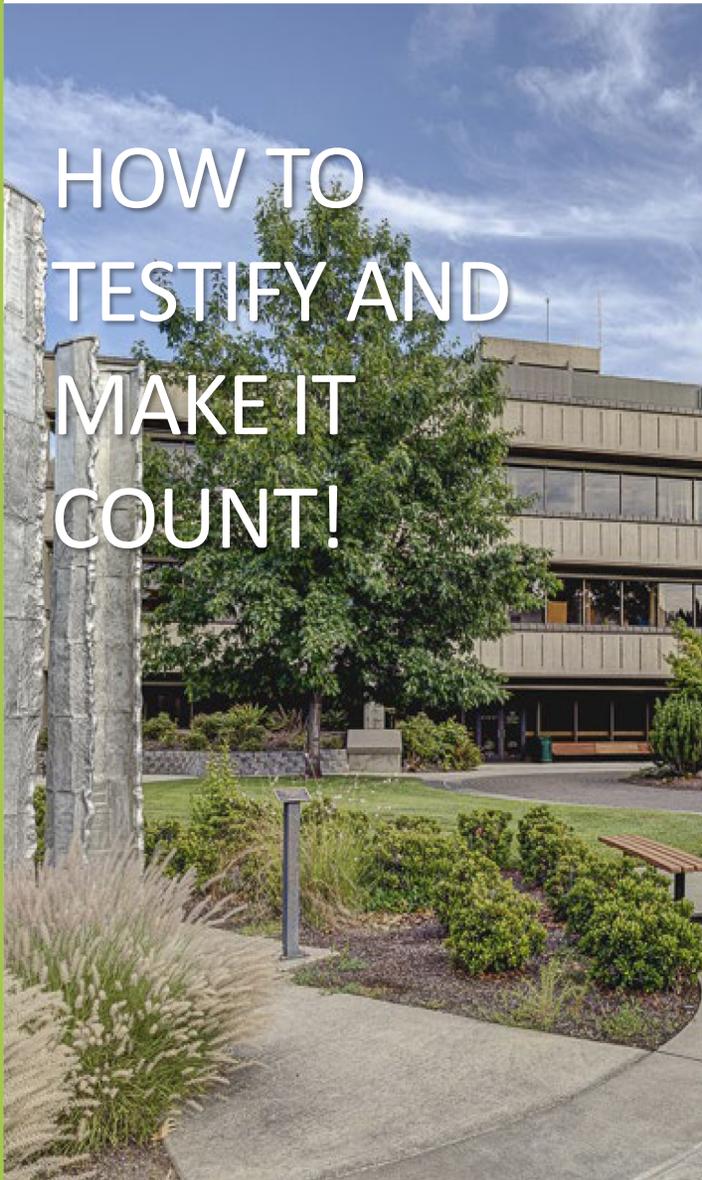


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HOW TO TESTIFY AND MAKE IT COUNT!



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IF YOU DON'T WISH TO SPEAK, WRITE

What happens at most hearings is that testimony is reviewed by the decision makers with some assistance from their staff. If written testimony is specific, to the point, and persuasive, it will be given just as much attention as oral testimony. By necessity, oral testimony is limited in time so that more people can speak, but written testimony has no length limit. It may be effective to summarize your testimony orally and submit the details in writing. Written materials are most effective if submitted at least 10 days prior to the hearing, allowing ample time for review.

KNOW THE LAW

Officials are not likely to make decisions in violation of city or state codes. No amount of passion, exhortation, petitions, or pleading by citizens will accomplish this. (However, laws can be changed. If there is a bad law, organize to have it amended in the future.)

Land use and zoning decisions must be based on specific criteria applied to relevant facts. This is what the decision makers will base their decision on. A copy of the criteria is included in a mailed hearing notice and is also available from the Planning Department and at the hearing. Rules of procedure for such decisions also restrict personal contact with decision makers prior to the hearing. The Guide to Land Use Planning, available from the Planning Department, contains much more information on planning and zoning.

BE INFORMED

Read up or interview people on the subject at hand before you plan your testimony. Visit the City's Planning Department to get a copy of the application proposal, the staff report, the relevant criteria, or whatever pertinent material is available. Then read it and plan your comments. The final materials are published one week prior to the meeting and are available on the internet at www.cityofmedford.org.

BE BOLD

Don't be held back because you aren't an engineer or technician, or even a very good writer. If you think you have an idea worth considering, chances are it is. The decision makers have staff assistance to help polish up suitable ideas or rearrange words to fit something in.

BE PREPARED

Plan to arrive before the meeting begins. Although there may be other hearings on the agenda, there is no telling how much time they will take. Go ahead and sign in.



SHOW YOUR STRENGTH

Many neighborhood groups have organized their testimony by having one or a few people speak on behalf of the group. The leader may ask those in the audience supporting the testimony to stand or raise a hand in an orderly manner.

SPEAK TO THE POINT

Public officials have heard hundreds of people give testimony. They are grateful and appreciative when the testimony is pertinent, well organized, and directed specifically to the matter at hand. Long stories, anecdotes, and complaints about generalities are a poor use of time.

REMEMBER YOUR OBJECTIVE

You want to persuade the decision makers to vote or decide in favor of your side of the issue. It usually does not do your cause any good to anger, alienate, or antagonize the group you are standing in front of.

STATE YOUR RECOMMENDATIONS

Don't leave the decision makers wondering just what it is that you want them to do.

BE REASONABLE

Put yourself in the shoes of the decision makers. They are in the difficult position of balancing all the views, interests, and proposals being made and finding the best course for serving the overall public good. While it is your obligation to present your own interests, remember that you have competition. Be prepared to compromise.