

Welcome to Springdale Town Hall!

Public Meetings and Public Hearings

In Utah a law called the Open and Public Meetings Act (OPMA) ensures that public officials make all their decisions under the public eye. OPMA specifies that every meeting of a quorum of a public body must be a public meeting, with the exception of social meetings and discussions of sensitive issues. It requires that the public be noticed of public meetings in a timely manner so they can attend them. OPMA ensures that the public can *witness* the workings of their public officials, but it doesn't guarantee the public the right to *participate* in the proceedings *unless the meeting is a public hearing*.

Even though the public is not guaranteed the right to speak at a public meeting, the Mayor or Chair of a meeting may invite citizens to speak, and citizens should wait to be recognized and invited to speak before doing so. In Springdale, the Mayor and Chair are often lenient and welcome comments informally.

Public hearings are the public's legal opportunity to *say something* in a public meeting. Public Hearings require some formality. Because they are the public's ensured opportunity to speak, it's important that anyone who wishes to speak should be allowed to. If one person is allowed to dominate the meeting, for example, other people may not get a chance to speak. If one issue is repeated again and again, other issues may not be expressed. Also, Public Hearings should not deteriorate into debate. The public should speak and the public body should listen. The Mayor or Chairman needs to keep order, keep the meeting moving, and protect the rights of all to speak. Some consistent rules really help him or her. Springdale Town Council has established clear guidelines and a format for public hearings to ensure that the public is a) completely informed about the issue being heard; and b) that all public comments are received equally and entirely.

Springdale Town Council Public Hearing Format

1. Welcome.
2. Review the hearing guidelines below, and establish any additional rules necessary.
3. Summary explanation and presentation of hearing item by town staff.
4. Question and answer period of staff by the Council.
5. Question and answer period of staff by the public. (Q/A)
6. Question and answer period of applicant by the Council.
7. Question and answer period of applicant by the audience.
8. Motion to open public hearing
9. Public comment period.
10. *No further public comment will be taken after hearing is closed.* Motion to close public hearing.
11. Town Council Deliberation
12. Town Council Action

The Town Staff or the Mayor will try to ensure that the public is always aware of where they are in the process.

The Council requests your cooperation with these Hearing Guidelines:

- Wait to be recognized before speaking, and speak only at the microphone. State your name each time you speak.
- You shouldn't expect more than one turn at the microphone during Q/A, so collect your thoughts. The same rule applies during the public hearing.
- Be brief. You should be able to get your point or question across in a short time, and in Q/A, the response should also be brief.
- If someone has made a point already, please don't repeat it! Saying you feel the same as the person who said it first is more efficient than saying it over.
- If you arrived late, you should not expect us to be discourteous to others by lengthening the meeting answering questions that have already been asked and answered.
- The comment period is over when the hearing closes. Please honor that. When the hearing closes, the time has come for us to deliberate on what we've heard and we will not accept further comments, questions, or suggestions.

Thank you for your cooperation and your participation, Springdale Town Council