

## Tips & Tricks for Speaking to the Durham City Council

1. There are three ongoing opportunities for residents to address the entire City Council:
  - a. At council business meetings, every 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday at 7pm (except holidays) in the council chambers on the first floor of City Hall (101 City Hall Plaza).
  - b. At council work sessions, each Thursday following the Monday business meeting in the conference room on the second floor of City Hall.
  - c. At special meetings, including Coffee with Council, budget meetings, meetings with our legislative delegation, etc.
2. You can attend a work session to speak on any issue you choose, but you must sign up to speak 10 days in advance. You can sign up online (<https://durhamnc.gov/1345/Citizen-Participation-Request-to-Appear>) or at the City Clerk's office on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of City Hall.
3. At regular council meetings and at work sessions where you have not signed up in advance, you may only speak on items that are on the agenda. See the City Clerk before the meeting to fill out a speaker card in order to get on the agenda. At Coffee with Council, anyone may speak on any issue without signing up in advance. At public hearings (which sometime take place during other meetings), the city is **required by law** to allow anyone who wishes to speak the opportunity.
4. Speakers usually get 3 minutes to speak, but this is at the discretion of the meeting chair (usually the mayor). It is advisable to have a 2-minute version of your remarks prepared as well. It will be helpful to write your statement or some notes down in advance to help you stay focused.
5. Speakers are not permitted to yield time to other speakers, but you may be granted additional time to answer questions from council members & staff. If your group has a longer statement to give, get several people to speak in a series, each one giving part of the statement.
6. At the beginning of your statement, please state your name & address, the issue you will be speaking on, and any personal qualifications you have to speak on the issue.
7. When asking the council to take action or criticizing council action, it can be helpful to recognize and appreciate any work that the council has already done to address the issue that you are speaking to. This helps prevent defensive emotional responses from council members.
8. Make it personal. It is important to share how the policy or decision you are speaking on will affect you, your family, or your community directly. Provide specific examples of how this policy will affect you.
9. Be specific in your ask. What do you want the council to do? If your proposal will require funding, where should the funding come from?
10. Anticipate objections to your proposal and prepare for possible challenges.
11. Take a moment to feel good about making your voice heard!