

MAKING YOUR POINT – MAKING IT COUNT

Government decision-making takes time—time for public input, time for analysis, and time for weighing both sides of the issue before making an informed decision.

People sometimes complain that the process takes too long, delay progress, costs extra money and is frustrating for discussion participants. Others say that the process doesn't give people enough time to comment and that decisions are made too quickly without enough consideration for all sides of the issue.

The foundation for democracy in America is our constitutional right to tell our elected leaders what we think about issues that affect us. This right is enjoyed by all citizens, regardless of education, background, or experience. City of Santa Cruz leaders welcome you to public meetings and encourage you to participate in discussions that affect you.



The way you present your message at the podium can help or hurt your ability to persuade your audience. It can either facilitate or obstruct the public participation process. Whether you are an experienced public speaker or speaking at the podium for the first time, it may be helpful to remember these public meeting tips:

- Identify your main points. Writing them down will help you organize your thoughts and remember them when you're at the podium.
- Check your facts. Accuracy improves your credibility and helps you make a positive impression.
- Handouts summarizing your position may be distributed to policy makers and staff before or after your presentation. Busy leaders appreciate clear, concise information (one or two pages) that helps them identify your key points and remember your presentation.
- Don't be nervous. If you are, don't apologize for it. Public Officials see many citizens who are nervous when speaking in front of an audience.

It may help to take a deep breath and exhale slowly just before you approach the podium.

- As you begin to speak, state your name and address clearly for the record. If you represent a group or organization, please state that information as well.
- Make your position known at the beginning, then present supporting information. You will sound organized, which helps people to understand your position.
- Keep your presentation short and simple. Attention spans are brief and people will remember a short presentation better than they will one that rambles and includes too much information.
- Don't repeat yourself. It uses valuable time and people tune out when they hear the same thing over and over. If a previous speaker has already made the point you planned to make, simply refer to that speaker and emphasize your support for that position.
- Be cautious about using humor which is very subjective. While some may laugh, others may be offended.
- Persuade, don't badger your audience. Compelling presentations can be very persuasive to both policy makers and public meeting audiences; however, insulting or degrading language can make you appear belligerent, reducing your credibility as well as the power of your message.
- Close your comments with an action statement such as, "Adopt this resolution" or "I urge you to vote 'no' on this ordinance."

Santa Cruz City leaders appreciate your interest in issues that affect the community. We hope these tips will help you prepare and present your remarks so they will be clear, concise, accurate and credible. If you follow these guidelines, your audience is likely to listen, pay attention, and maybe even agree with you!

Santa Cruz City government is not the City Council, City staff or Santa Cruz citizens – it's all of us working together to understand each others' opinions so we can make the best decisions for our community.

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING!