

From: [Gary Scott](#)
To: [City Council](#)
Cc: [Kelly Fernandez](#); [Board and Council Messages](#)
Subject: Audience Participation Rules
Date: Thursday, April 18, 2024 4:20:17 PM

You don't often get email from grscott520@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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To the Mayor and Members of the City Council:

North Venice Neighborhood Alliance objects to the proposed change in the audience participation rules that currently allow one person to speak on behalf of someone else. Under the proposal, that could occur only if the speaker was the attorney for or had a legal power of attorney signed by the other person. As a practical matter that would rarely occur.

There are various reasons why a person cannot personally appear and speak at a council meeting. A person can be sick, or have to work or attend to children, or may be afraid of speaking in public. That person's voice should be heard without the need for him or her to hire an attorney or prepare a power of attorney. And that person should not be restricted to only submitting a letter or email.

Are people speaking on behalf of others an actual problem that needs addressing? If so, perhaps there are other ways to go about it other than essentially silencing the person who wants a voice. Thank you for your consideration.

Gary Scott for the NVNA

From: [Edwin Martin](#)
To: [City Council](#); [Nicholas Pachota](#)
Cc: [Board and Council Messages](#)
Subject: Limiting voter input at Meetings
Date: Saturday, April 20, 2024 2:23:50 PM

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I hope Council will provide sufficient opportunity for consideration of changes with the voters. What is the problem addressed by potential changes? Discussion and then further consideration.

There is considerable concern in the public media, about government being unresponsive to citizens and I would hope your course of action would be reassuring, not adding additional concern.

The Council I served on increased citizen input by allowing input by consultants, attorneys on matters where the developers were already allowed those privileges.

Thank you,

Ed Martin
Venice resident.

From: [Faybina75](#)
To: [City Council](#)
Cc: [Board and Council Messages](#)
Subject: Public comment
Date: Sunday, April 21, 2024 10:23:28 AM

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Hello, I am writing to respectfully ask you to not change or reduce the current public comment time at Council meetings.

Thank you,

Jacqueline Fay and Paul Bina
204 Bayshore Circle
Venice

[Sent from the all new AOL app for iOS](#)

From: [Florence Connor](#)
To: [City Council](#)
Cc: [Board and Council Messages](#)
Subject: Public speaking at meetings
Date: Sunday, April 21, 2024 3:44:38 PM

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Not all individuals have the skill of expressing their views with the written word. It is important to have individuals able to represent their thoughts to the board. Without participation it becomes a “closed meeting”. However, I do favor limiting the open mic to 3 minutes unless extended by the board.

Sincerely, Florence E. Connor. — A Florida resident
652 Bird Bay Dr. W.
Venice FL, 34285

From: 146bella@gmail.com
To: [City Council](#)
Cc: [Board and Council Messages](#)
Subject: We are against these agenda items please vote NO
Date: Sunday, April 21, 2024 10:16:59 AM

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From Debbie Gericke:

At their April 23 meeting, City Council will consider two proposals that Venice Thrives has concerns about:

Reducing public comments at their meetings: The city attorney and city clerk have submitted a memo recommending that City Council limit when the public can speak at Council meetings by:

- restricting public comment to the one-hour audience participation section at the beginning of each meeting and eliminating the option to speak when specific agenda items are being discussed. (Quasi-judicial public hearings are the exception.)
- eliminating the ability of Council members to respond to public comments during audience participation. Although such responses are uncommon, explicitly forbidding them needlessly limits Council's interaction with citizens.
- restricting the ability of a member of the public to read another resident's comments into the record as is currently allowed when someone is unable to attend in person. Currently a resident has 5 minutes for each comment; the change would mean they get 5 minutes combined.

Venice Thrives believes that public participation at City Council meetings is an essential part of effective and informed local government and that the current process works well. Listening to their constituents should be a high priority for our elected officials. If you agree, **please email citycouncil@venicefl.gov before Tuesday and urge them not to change public participation rules for their meetings.**

Changing the city's election cycles. Since 1927, the Venice City Charter has mandated that the mayor and City Council serve three-year terms, with staggered elections so that two members of Council are elected each year. The mayor has proposed changes to that election cycle, in the name of saving money, by eliminating elections that don't coincide with County Commission election years.

This would mean that members would serve four-year terms instead of three. And to

accomplish this quickly, **City Council will consider proposals that would add an extra year onto the current terms of up to five members of Council.** To do this, they will have to change the City Charter and hold a citizens referendum this November.

Venice Thrives believes that if changes are made to the election process, current City Council terms should not be extended. The voters elected City Council to three-year terms and any extension of that period contradicts the will of the voters. If you agree, write to citycouncil@venicefl.gov.

Venice Thrives when citizens get involved.

From: [@gmail.com](#)
To: [City Council](#)
Cc: [Board and Council Messages](#)
Subject: Voter Feedback
Date: Sunday, April 21, 2024 1:24:28 PM

You don't often get email from judycross7@verizon.net. [Learn why this is important](#)

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I urge all of you on the Venice City Council **not** to place new time limitations from the feedback you need in order to make informed decisions! I doubt you would put time constraints on Staff, etc. You need to know the pulse of the voters. By limiting speaker time, you are essentially stating what we have to say is irrelevant to your decision-making. Transparency is critical! **Listen** to the people who put you into Office. Please.

~Judy Cross
1585 Tarpon Center Dr., #2
Venice, FL 34285

From: [Nancy DeForge](#)
To: [City Council](#)
Cc: [Board and Council Messages](#)
Subject: Public comment times
Date: Sunday, April 21, 2024 1:31:23 PM

You don't often get email from ndeforge13@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Greetings:

I urge you to allow public comment to remain when a specific agenda is being discussed. It brings to light how the public feels about a particular issue, BEFORE the Council addresses it, as a unit.

Often, public comments can be lost in business discussions of council members, especially during a long agenda. That can be expected!

The public, as registered voters, elected each Council member to their positions. Therefore, they should have every right to be heard, either during audience participation, or on the particular agenda topic.

What Florida city "model" did the City Attorney and City Clerk use for this, unfriendly to Citizens of Venice, proposal?

Thank you for continuing the present format for public input.

Sincerely,
Nancy DeForge
Nokomis, Fl

From: [Barbara Desmond](#)
To: [City Council](#)
Cc: [Board and Council Messages](#)
Subject: Election Change & Citizen participation
Date: Sunday, April 21, 2024 11:32:51 AM

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While we may save a few dollars with this recommend voting change in City Elections, local candidates and issues get lost. Venice is front and center in off years and that's good for our community. Citizen input should be encouraged not limited and discouraged. Elected officials work for the folks who put them in office and community input should be one valuable resource in helping reach Council decision's.
Sent from my iPhone

From: [ljelliott2358](#)
To: [City Council](#)
Cc: [Board and Council Messages](#)
Subject: Public participation at meetings
Date: Sunday, April 21, 2024 11:05:54 AM

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PLEASE DO NOT CHANGE THE RULES ABOUT PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT MEETINGS. OUR VOICES NEED TO BE HEARD!

Sent from my Verizon, Samsung Galaxy smartphone

From: [Kristin Hoffschmidt](#)
To: [City Council](#)
Cc: [Board and Council Messages](#)
Subject: Don't reduce public comment opportunities at Council meetings
Date: Sunday, April 21, 2024 1:36:35 PM

You don't often get email from kristinhoffschmidt@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Dear members of the Venice City Council:

I am writing to urge you to vote against limiting the public's opportunity to speak at Council meetings. Public participation strengthens our community and opportunities for public comment allow City Council members to be informed about issues and hear the public's opinions. The right to address elected officials is a fundamental part of US democracy, and limiting it curtails citizens' rights.

I would like to ask why limitations are being considered. Venice City Council has not experienced serious problems related to public comment. Other communities have experienced serious disruption, threats, bigotry, and falsehoods, such as those described in the article linked below, and only then have they considered limiting public comment.

Please consider carefully if there is a need for such a drastic, anti-democratic measure at this time and do not change the rules related to public participation.

Sincerely,
Kristin Hoffschmidt
Gulf Drive - Venice

Link to a 2023 Washington Post
article: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2023/01/17/public-comment-new-rules-free-speech/>

“But some legal experts and lawmakers worry some restrictions are overreactions by thin-skinned officials that skirt unconstitutional limitations on free speech. Even if legal, they argue, reining in comment runs contrary to the American ideal of letting the public express views to representatives chosen and funded by taxpayers — even if those views include threats, bigotry and falsehoods.

“Access to public meetings and that face-to-face, whether virtual or in-person, opportunity for the citizenry to talk to their elected officials is foundational to our democracy,” said Carol Rose, executive director of the ACLU of Massachusetts.”

From: [watkins](#)
To: [City Council](#)
Cc: [Board and Council Messages](#)
Subject: limiting public participation
Date: Sunday, April 21, 2024 10:39:56 AM

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Dear Councilmembers:

Please side on behalf of the public on this matter. Knowing full well it tests your endurance to listen to some of the public, (as it does mine) it's important to show the townpeople that you DO WANT TO LISTEN. Sending the opposite message further alienates the council from the townspeople and increases resentment. Hopefully that's not what you want.

Thanks for your thoughtful consideration.

Greg and Cecilia Watkins
324 Pedro Street
Venice, Fl. 34285

From: [Diana](#)
To: [City Council](#)
Cc: [Board and Council Messages](#)
Subject: Silencing citizens
Date: Sunday, April 21, 2024 9:37:00 PM

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You forget that you are elected by the people of Venice. When they see issues they want the voice to show you why you are there, to represent them. To limit our opportunities to tell you our grievances would be a travesty to our system. Also three years is the contract with this board, please honor it. Thank you for your time
Sent from my iPhone

From: [Patti Bradstreet](#)
To: [City Council](#)
Cc: [Board and Council Messages](#)
Subject: Public Participation
Date: Monday, April 22, 2024 8:54:56 AM

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To whom it may concern,

I am writing regarding the recommendation to limit community participation at board meetings. I believe that this change will have a negative impact on local involvement in many different ways. I would recommend that instead of moving toward a more restrictive model that the board consider developing guidelines for participation in meetings; rules for engagement.

Patricia Bradstreet

232 St. Augustine Ave. # 905

From: [Jim Coler](#)
To: [City Council](#)
Cc: [Board and Council Messages](#)
Subject: Public comment at city council meetings
Date: Monday, April 22, 2024 7:54:33 AM

[You don't often get email from jimcoler@yahoo.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification>]

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I'm writing to oppose the changing of the public comment time. There is no need to make this change and it will reduce the public's opportunity to provide valuable input to their representatives.

Thank You!

Jim Coler

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Mary Kean](#)
To: [City Council](#)
Cc: [Board and Council Messages](#)
Subject: Proposed Changes
Date: Monday, April 22, 2024 1:41:58 PM

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To City Council Members:

We are fulltime Fla residents and enjoy living here. Thank you for your hard work. We are greatly concerned over two recent proposals regarding Venice City Council. We believe it only fair that current City Council members complete their current 3 yr terms prior to any change in election cycle. We also believe public comment at City Council meeting should remain as present and not be further restricted. Current public comment rules are restrictive enough, no need to muzzle voters beyond current rules. Thank you for considering these comments. Mary & Dennis Kean

From: [Jackie M](#)
To: [City Council](#)
Cc: [Board and Council Messages](#)
Subject: Public Input at Meetings
Date: Monday, April 22, 2024 2:50:27 PM

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To Council, in particular Mr. Pachota,

Please do not write to people that you don't want to limit public input at meetings when you're poised to do exactly that.

The claimed "inconsistency with code" is no inconsistency at all. FL. Statute 286.0114 completely allows what the City has been doing all along. The State law simply defines the required unrefined minimum. The City has evolved to a higher standard for its Citizens and you're proposing to take that away.

I'm surprised you didn't refer to this as a "housekeeping" item...because if you need a list of "housekeeping" items the City should be attending to instead of trying to fix something that isn't broken, I'm sure the list of people emailing you and Council about this topic will be able to provide you with one.

Jackie Mineo

From: [Hank Pizer](#)
To: [City Council](#)
Cc: [Board and Council Messages](#)
Subject: I'm opposed to restricting public comment at meetings or changing the Charter to create 4-year terms
Date: Monday, April 22, 2024 8:41:41 AM

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Dear City Councillor,

I understand that the Venice City Council will consider a proposal by the city attorney and city clerk that would restrict public comment to the one-hour audience participation section at the beginning of each meeting as well as eliminating the option to speak on a specific agenda item. **I am opposed to this proposal and hope you will reject it.** Central to the democratic process is the ability of citizens to question and comment on actions of their elected officials. Please preserve the current public participation rules.

I am also opposed to changing the Venice City Charter so that council members would serve for 4 years. The Charter specifies 3-year terms and I am against changing this. The rotating elections with a 3-year term allows for turnover that adds new voices to the deliberations of the City Council. Please do not change the Charter. And certainly do NOT extend the terms of existing council members toward the goal of 4-year terms. Again, such an action disregards and undermines the wishes of the people who elected you.

Thank you for your attention to my concerns.

Best regards,

Hank Pizer
500 Park Blvd. South
Venice, 34285

From: [Christine Pizer](#)
To: [City Council](#)
Cc: [Board and Council Messages](#)
Subject: Do NOT restrict public comment or change the Charter to create 4-year terms
Date: Monday, April 22, 2024 8:34:06 AM

You don't often get email from chrispizer@fastmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Dear City Councillor,

I am disturbed to hear that the Venice City Council will consider a proposal by the city attorney and city clerk that would restrict public comment to the one-hour audience participation section at the beginning of each meeting as well as eliminating the option to speak on a specific agenda item. *The essence of democracy is for elected officials to hear from and consider the concerns of the people who elected them.* We see this right curtailed all too often these days. Please preserve the current public participation rules.

Equally troubling is the idea of changing the Venice City Charter so that council members would serve for 4 years. Since 1927, the Charter specifies 3-year terms and I am against changing this. The rotating elections with a 3-year term allows for turnover that adds new voices to the deliberations of the City Council. Please do not change the Charter. And certainly do NOT extend the terms of existing council members toward the goal of 4-year terms. Again, such an action disregards and undermines the wishes of the people who elected you.

Thank you for your attention to my concerns.

Best regards,

Christine Pizer
500 Park Blvd. South
Venice, 34285

From: [Dennis Sica](#)
To: [City Council](#)
Cc: [Board and Council Messages](#)
Subject: Terms and public comment time
Date: Sunday, April 21, 2024 5:00:46 PM

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I fully agree with Venice Thrives on not changing public comment time and member terms. Let us have some say, we feel your not hearing us. You need to slow development and hear what residents are saying.

Dennis Sica
Venetian Golf and River Club

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From: [Suzanne Holway Jerry](#)
To: [City Council](#)
Cc: [Board and Council Messages](#)
Subject: Agenda item April 23 Restricting Residents speaking time , City Council Terms
Date: Tuesday, April 23, 2024 8:44:05 AM

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Was present in city hall during a meeting when Fiedler & Moore were talking about their desire to restrict audience speaker resident participation related to quasi judicial hearings and other meetings that occur last year . This discussion occurred because of the Neal vs Resident citizen organized Coalitions hearing that had transpired .

A few councilors needed to have the process explained related to how one resident is able to represent others . The lawyer for Venice shared the opinion that the builder is often not present but represented by a lawyer and that lawyer last yeat claimed more time to speak as well sharing that he represented other businesses permitting him to speak at greater length . She said the citizens also have this capability if the proper forms are filled out and verified as valid which operate somewhat like a proxy vote . Signatures on these forms are required for the representative speaker which then permits that speaker additional time . This is how democracy works . Both of these councilors shared the opinion that residents should not be permitted to have someone ride other than a lawyer represent them . That statement puts only the wealthy developer in the drivers seat and relegate the citizen as a walker who is not permitted to pass GO . The developer is given a Pass to do whatever he pleases .

Venice becomes a different city between early May through late October early November . The tax paying citizens number tens of thousands in droves that venture elsewhere for extended periods of time . Alot of times developers and other important considerations come into play related to important decisions made by the City Council . Developers know this and applications are often designed to be heard for approvals during these times believing and knowing that push back from residents will not exist in numbers . Emails can be sent but residents have learned these emails unless they number in the difficult to count numbers are not often considered as an automatic prompted texted response occurs .

You can have your staff scrutinize more carefully these forms and even call the folks supposedly being represented and even state that skirting the rules can result in being restricted from future speaker time . You can set up stricter protocols . We have sat in chambers a lot and seen one lawyer present and speak every single time you address any Venice development issue .

If you do this you also need to restrict access of the local town lawyer family in the city chamber and offices domain given the perception is that this family is provided a lot of latitude related to questionably ethical access to city staff and officials.

Visits and conversations to city hall offices by lawyers and citizens should be logged and visible and be placed on record .

The citizen speaker time is already limited in nature and regulated with proper forms in play .

We have video clips of various city councilors sharing their unbiased opinions related to wanting to restrict citizen resident speaker time . This won't bode well for the next city council election ejection outcome .

Changing the length of the terms and extending that time does not honor citizen tax payer representation . If a councilor is involved with elicit support of a lucrative individual or party this becomes clearly evident in the term already being served . Terms are established to establish a true democratic system .

Respectfully shared ,

Registered Voters ,
The Jerrys
VRGC
North Venice
Sent from my iPhone Suzanne