

Activity: Make a Public Comment (City/County Legislators)

Objective: Use persuasive arguments to impact lawmakers in local government.

Leader Prep: Identify the city or county legislative group in your area. These groups have many names, but could be called: city council, common council, town council, town board, board of alders, municipal council, or board of supervisors.

Supplies:

- Agenda
- Proposal for new law
- Petitions or other supportive documents
- Elevator Pitch
- Prepared comment
- Safety ratios for travel
- Permission slips



1. This process is very similar to the guidelines for making a public comment to a city or county advisory council.
2. Obtain a copy of the agenda for the convening of your legislative body. You may also wish to look at the “minutes” or previous meeting agendas to see what has been happening in your community. By knowing what was said and voted on, you’ll have more information about the comments you should make. Try to answer the following questions about the legislative body based on what information they provide online or at the local municipal building:
 - a. Who are the members of the group? What regions, wards, or districts do they supervise?
 - b. What are the current issues they’re discussing? Is it time to pass the annual budget or is there a focus on urban planning?
 - c. What did they do at their last meeting? What did they talk about? Who made comments?
3. Now that you have more information about the legislative agenda, you are ready to draft your comment. Similar to a letter to the editor or your elevator pitch, a public comment is just a couple of key points about your issue. It should only take a couple of minutes to say. Practice several times with friends, your guardian or parent, your troop leader or someone else to help you stay calm and remember what you want to say.
4. Go to the City or County Clerk Office to fill out a speaker card, if one is required. Depending on the formality of the legislative body and how many speakers they expect to receive, you may be waiting in line at the event or you may be seated and be asked to take a turn.
5. You will need to attend the meeting in person to share your comment. Sometimes, if you have an important conflict, a clerk may be able to share your comments if you cannot attend. However, it can be difficult for someone else to put passion and urgency into your prepared comment. Do your best to be there. Remember to wear your Girl Scout uniform and insignia.
6. When you get up to speak, share your name, where you live, and your troop information, if you like. Then, state the comments you’ve prepared. It’s okay to be nervous! Remember to speak clearly and confidently.
7. At the end of your comment, say thank you to the legislators for listening.
8. You may stay for the remainder of the meeting, or if you need to leave, you may do so. When you return home, you may share additional information like photos, graphs, media you’ve produced, your petition or action day, or anything else via email or by mail. Be prompt in these submissions so that if a decision is being made, they have all of the information needed.

