

Tips for writing to City Council members or testifying at Council meetings. Subject: Update to Camping Ban

S Perkins, 10.6.2025

Written comments:

- § Identify the two or three key points you want to make. Why are you writing to them?
- § Include brief examples from your personal experience—are you a person who has been swept, do you have friends or loved ones who have been swept, are you a paid staff person or volunteer helping people who have been swept? What have you experienced/seen that reinforces your key points?
- § Be concise—the longer your e-mail or letter is, the less likely that Council members will read it. A Council member recently said, “we are not going to read paragraphs.”
- § Thank the Council Member for considering your point of view.
- § cc the City Clerk’s Office, which assures that your comments are put into the public record (cityclerk@tacoma.gov).
- § Get your written comments in at least 24 hours before the Council meeting for which they are intended.

On-line or in-person spoken testimony:

- § You will be nervous when you speak. Everyone is nervous when they speak, it’s normal 😊 and it can be managed well.
- § Be AWARE of the time limits. You will get a max of 2 minutes, and possibly only 90 seconds. Time your testimony to stay within these time limits. Literally read it with your phone’s stop watch running. They will cut you off at the time limit.
- § Write your testimony out (on your phone or on paper) and READ it. You will likely be too nervous to talk effectively “off the cuff” so have it organized and focused in writing. Even if this sounds like it’s too structured, you will be glad you did this. 😊

- § Select two or three key points and organize your comments around them.
- § Speak from personal experience. What you have seen, what you have done, what you have heard from others. These are the most powerful stories.
- § Practice your testimony several times before the meeting, so that you are comfortable with it and can read it while also looking up at Council members occasionally.
- § Even if you flub a word, or lose your place while reading...that just makes you a real and authentic human being, standing up for something that is important to you. The reaction will be understanding, not critical.
- § Follow up with Council members in writing if you feel that a written piece would more fully explain your point of view. Two minutes or 90 seconds is not much time to develop a sophisticated thought. 😊
- § Congratulate yourself for being brave, and thank others who also made the effort to testify on line or in person.
- § Start thinking about what you might say in future testimony opportunities. 😊