

An Advocate's Guide to Influencing Detroit City Council

What is the Council's structure?

There are nine members on the [Detroit City Council](#), one for each of the City's seven districts, and two at-large members who are elected to represent all residents' interests. Residents should [contact](#) their district Council person and/or at-large CMs to get information or assistance with complaints.

What is Council's schedule?

Council serves 10 months each year, in two sessions: January through mid-July and September through mid-November. Formal sessions take place on Tuesdays, and “standing” committee meetings are on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays.

Monday

10:00 AM: **Public Health and Safety Committee**- matters related to police, transportation, fire, public health, demolition and cleanup, property maintenance (where safety is an issue), appeals and administrative hearings, and utilities.

Tuesday

10:00 AM: **Formal Session**

Wednesday

10:00 AM: **Internal Operations Committee**- matters related to lawsuits against the City; Council boards and commissions, City media; Human Resources; Human Rights Department (Civil Rights, Inclusion, and Opportunity); City IT; and elections.

1:00 PM: **Budget, Finance, and Audit Committee**- matters relating to the City's institutional integrity and financial operations, including auditor reports, property taxes, and grants.

Thursday

10:00 AM: **Planning and Economic Development Committee**- matters related to tax exemptions, land sales (Land Bank), zoning changes, housing, workforce development, and special authorities such as the Downtown Development Authority and Detroit Brownfield Redevelopment Authority.

1:00 PM: **Neighborhood and Community Services Committee**- matters related to arts and culture, City history, parks and recreation, libraries, municipal parking, Eastern Market, and Belle Isle.

How do items get on the agenda and move through Council?

1. Legislation (new or amended ordinance) and resolutions first appear on the Tuesday Formal Session Agenda.
2. During the Formal Session, legislation and resolutions are referred to the appropriate standing committee, to be discussed at their next meeting.
3. The standing committee will discuss the item and send it back for the next Formal Session's agenda, often with a recommendation to approve.

How does Public Comment work?

Listen for "raise your hand": The Committee Chair or Council President asks those wishing to speak to raise their hand either virtually (using the "raise hand" function on Zoom) or in person. This is your ONLY chance to indicate that you want to speak, so listen closely for it!

Commenting in person: Residents who are present in person will receive a speaker card if they raised their hand to speak. They will write their first or last name (or both) on the card; the cards will be collected so that the Chair or President can call each resident speaker in turn.

Comment time limit: The Committee Chair or Council President decides how much time each person may speak depending on the length of the agenda. It may be as short as 30 seconds or as long as two minutes. Most commonly, one, one and a half, or two minutes are given. Since speakers or commenters won't know in advance how long they'll be given, ***they should prepare three versions of their comments—one-minute, one-and-a-half-minute, and two-minute versions.***

Dressing for Council: You may dress in everyday clothes or in your best. One's clothing has less of an impact than speaking from a place of experience in the community.

What to say: Keeping the time limit in mind, tell the city council why you care about the issue and how their decision will impact your life.