

Twin Falls County Planning and Zoning Department

How to Testify at a Public Hearing

Public Hearing Process

The hearing process is designed to alert Community leaders to public concerns and to encourage citizen participation in government issues. Planning and Zoning regularly presents information before the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Citizen input is vital to the decision-making process. If you have concerns about a project in your area or want to show your support or opposition for a particular item, get involved. Following the points below will help you organize your ideas and enhance your testimony.

Remember Your Objective

Your goal is to persuade the decision makers to decide in favor of your view of an issue, alienating or antagonizing the group you want to influence will not help your cause. *The best way to present your ideas is with testimony that is clear and informed.*

Know the Law

The Commission may not make decisions that violate Federal, State or County laws. No amount of passion, exhortation or pleading by citizens will accomplish this. *If you believe a law needs to be changed, organize to have it amended. But please remember that the issue before the Commission has to be judged on the merits of the laws currently in effect.*

Show Your Strength

Many groups organize their testimony by having a few people speak on behalf of the group. The leader should ask the chair permission to have those in the audience supporting the testimony to stand. This conveys the extent of public concern with the issue.

Speak to the Point

Public officials have heard testimony from hundreds of people. They're grateful when testimony is pertinent, well organized and directly regards the matter at hand. *Long stories, lectures on philosophy, or abstract complaints about generalities are a poor use of time, since the immediate problem is for the decision makers to choose a course of action on a specific request.*

State Your Recommendations

When you testify, be sure to include your recommendations for resolving the situation. Be specific: don't leave the Commission guessing about what it was you wanted them to do.

Be Informed

Your testimony gains credibility if it is well researched. *Get a copy of the staff report (or the plan, proposed ordinance or other available pertinent materials) for the project, and read it before planning your testimony.* If you have questions or need clarification on an issue, contact the Planning and Zoning Department, ask to speak with the person handling the application.

Be Bold

Do not make wild claims or accusations, stick to the facts, you don't need to be an architect, engineer or planning professional to provide insightful testimony. Don't worry if you're not a great writer or public speaker; just become informed and express your opinion.

Be Heard

Testimony can be either presented orally or in writing. Each method is given attention by the Commission. Written testimony has no length limitations, so you can explain your concerns or recommendations in detail. Oral testimony presented at the hearing has time limitations, so that everyone concerned has a chance to speak. Written testimony, comments and/or submittals must be submitted as noticed prior to the hearing to allow time for the Commission to review it.

Be Reasonable

The Commission must balance the views, interests and proposals of all parties involved, and find the best course for serving the overall public good. While it is your obligation to present your own interests, remember that you have legitimate competition. Be prepared to occasionally compromise.

Contact Information

Should you have questions or like to review an application please contact the Planning and Zoning Office at:

Twin Falls County West Building

630 Addison Ave. West Suite 1100, Twin Falls, Idaho 83301

Phone: 208-734-9490

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