

## How to make a presentation at a town council or municipal council

*Consider attending a few council meetings beforehand. Maybe with a small group of fellow citizens. Consider speaking to some of the councillors either before or after the meeting to get to know them a bit. Shake their hand. This may put them more at ease and make you seem less threatening.*

As far as making a presentation is concerned. first, contact the town or municipal office to register to make a formal presentation or speak before the council. I prefer to make this contact in person rather than by phone, letter or email. This is because you get more immediate answers, avoid some obstacles and there is no “back and forth” to waste time.

The receptionist at the town or municipal office may be able to arrange a time for your presentation or they may have to refer to another person to arrange the date and time.

Wait times to make a presentation can vary. If it sounds like too long a wait you might say, *“I was hoping for something a bit sooner. That seems like a long time to wait.”* They may offer to put you on a cancellation list. That means you could be called to present on very short notice. Leave contact information such as a phone number or email address. Be polite, cooperative, respectful and appreciative with the staff. They can make things easier for you at times.

You may be asked to fill out a request form and to describe what your presentation will be on. When you do this, use broad concepts and offer as little detail as possible. For example, if your presentation is on the disrespectful way the council treats the voters / citizens ... you might word it this way. *“My presentation will focus on ways in which council and our local citizens can work together effectively.”*

You may be asked to submit a copy of your actual presentation in writing beforehand. I don't like this because basically you are being asked to reveal your arguments and strategy before "the game". If the council or CAO doesn't like your viewpoint they might delay your opportunity to present. Or, they could arrange things in such a way that it will be difficult for you. So, I would recommend submitting the outline or full written presentation in vague and gentle language. However, when you deliver the actual speech, you can set aside your notes and deliver a more "straight from the heart" message.

When you are called on to make your presentation, don't rush to the mike; be calm and take your time to get any notes arranged and make sure the mike is adjusted to your liking in terms of distance, etc. Then ask if the council can hear you OK.

First, thank the council for allowing you to speak. Give a one or two sentence description of what you are going to say. For example, *"In the next few minutes I will explain why paper ballots are far superior to any electronic methods when it comes to voting. I plan to make this presentation brief but informative."* Then launch into your presentation.

If you are allowed, stand rather than sit. This is because if you are on your feet you can move easier, gesture more freely, step to the right or forward to make a point, etc.

I would recommend having brief notes in point form that you can glance at or refer to if you absolutely must. But chances are that you *know* what you want to say, so just speak to the council like you would to a good friend. Be respectful. Some people have been blessed with a good "radio" voice; good tone, clear enunciation. Unfortunately, I am **not** one of those people. So, in the end we all must just do the best we can with the particular talent or talents that we have to work with. And in most cases that will work out to be just fine.

When you have completed your presentation, don't forget to thank the mayor/warden and the councillors. Also, you may offer to answer any questions that they might have.