



EXPRESSING SUPPORT OR DISSENT FOR A PROJECT

Without citizens speaking up and sharing their perspective, local government and elected officials can make decisions without knowing what the voters and citizens truly think and want. This guide spells out several ways you can get involved to voice your support of- or concerns about - City & County Projects.

Why Get Yourself & Others Involved?

Your voice makes a difference and can influence the outcome or direction of projects that are implemented in our City. More voices can demonstrate greater concern or support for the issue at hand. Any of the tactics below can be utilized by either an individual or group of like-minded community members to engage with and- potentially- influence decision makers including City staff, and elected officials as well as board and commission members.

Tactic 1: Testifying Before Council & Commissions

If you want to support or express concerns or reservations about a City project or program, you could testify before a City Council or the Board or Commission making the decision. Time for public testimony included on agenda for (City Council) Regular Sessions as well as public meetings (of boards and commissions). All are welcome to provide their testimony so long as it fits within allotted time constraints (typically 1-2 minutes). Expert testimonies may be allotted more time.

Tip: When you approach the lectern, remember to state your name, home address, and/or the name of the organization or group you are representing first and your position (whether you are testifying “in support” or “in dissent” of the project) second. That way, if you run short on time, your position will be clear.

Tactic 2: Submitting a Letter of Support or Dissent

If you or your community members cannot make it to a board or commission meeting in person (or are just shy about speaking in public) submitting letters of support or dissent can be another effective way to express your thoughts and share your experience. Letters can be sent either by individuals or on behalf of groups. However, letters that are composed by individuals in their own words, rather than a mass “copy and paste” message, tend to be better received and given more weight when decisions are made.

Tips: 1) Try to limit your letters to one page. Important items to include are your name, address, experience with the project/neighborhood/ subject, clearly stated position, 2) You can also mention why you have taken that position/ think the position is important and relevant professional or personal expertise, 3) Submit your letter early (3+ days before the meeting/session if possible).

ADDITIONAL INFO & RESOURCES

About City Council Project Phases

When expressing support or dissent for City Council projects, it's good to have a basic understanding of how City Council operates. When the City enters a contract over a certain dollar amount, a vote of City Council is required. In Fort Wayne City Council projects have 3 phases: 1) Project Introduction, 2) Project discussion, and 3) Project Decision.

Hearing times and topics can be found on City Council Agendas, which are released at least 48 hours in advance of the hearing date. All of the council's official records are public. Resolutions typically relate to internal administration while ordinances are official written actions that have the force of law and apply to the community. To learn more, you can also request to sit down with your council person to discuss an issue find more information about a topic.

Making a Strong Point

Letters- Remember to write letters in your own words. Mass letters and emails are not always given as much weight. If you need a starting point, you can use the template on the 101 Guide Website to get started.

Testifying: Keep what you say within the time limit, focused on one topic, and relevant to the current project.

Testimonials - Make an effort to be clear and concise and focus on facts and data rather than on your feelings alone. Writing out your talking points ahead of time can help you accomplish this stay on track and hit all of your major talking point(s). If you- or the group you represent-want to cover many talking points, consider recruiting others to join you in writing or testifying!

Public Records & Announcements

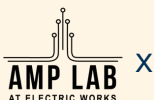
Dates and topics for City Council Meetings and other public hearings can be found in a variety of locations. Hearings related to land use are often announced on lawn signs posted on the property of interest. The lawn signs will indicate the date, time, and location of the hearing. Information about other hearings and meetings can be found on agendas for each committee and commission on the City of Fort Wayne's website.

Please remember that different topics and issues are addressed by different branches and divisions of City Government. For example, City Utilities works on sewer and drainage projects, while Public Works focuses on streets and related infrastructure, and the mayor's administration handles finance.

The Fort Wayne City Clerk's office houses all City records. You can contact the clerk's office or visit their website if you're curious about the history of a particular issue. Additional records-about Indiana's City, County, and State government's contracts, budgets, and spending records- can be found on the Indiana Access Gateway website at <https://gateway.ifionline.org/>.

Visit the following website or scan the QR Code for links to each City Department:

<https://www.cityoffortwayne.org/departments.html>



This guide was created by the City's Department of Neighborhoods and AMP Lab students in partnership with the City of Fort Wayne's City Council Administration. For more information visit our website or scan the QR Code.



www.fortwayneguides.org