

## **Human Relations Commission FAQ: Attending a HRC Meeting**

Thank you for your interest in the Human Relations Commission (HRC). Here is a list of FAQs regarding Commission Meetings. If you have any additional questions, please contact [alayna.cruz@cityofpaloalto.org](mailto:alayna.cruz@cityofpaloalto.org) or (650) 463-4906.

### **Where is the meeting located?**

Meetings are generally held in the Council Chambers at City Hall, 250 Hamilton Ave. The meetings are also broadcast on Zoom, Cable TV Channel 26, live on the [City of Palo Alto's YouTube Channel](#), and the [Midpen Media Center](#). If there is a change to the meeting location and/or broadcast availability, it will be posted on the meeting agenda.

### **What is the difference between a regular and a special meeting?**

The regular HRC meetings are held the second Thursday of each month at 6 p.m. in City Hall. There are instances when a regular meeting is canceled; when this occurs, there will be an announcement posted on the HRC website under "upcoming meetings" with the date of the next meeting.

A special meeting is any meeting that is scheduled on a date or time that is not regular.

### **How can I find out what's on the Agenda?**

The agenda is generally posted on the [HRC website](#) and at the kiosk outside City Hall one week before the meeting date. All regular meetings must be posted at least 48 hours in advance and 24 hours for special meetings. Subscribe to the [Human Relations Commission email list](#) to receive agendas directly to your inbox.

### **How can I communicate with the Commissioners outside of a meeting?**

To send a message to the Commissioners outside of a meeting, email [hrc@cityofpaloalto.org](mailto:hrc@cityofpaloalto.org). All emails to this address are a public record and are included in the agenda packet. To have your email included in the meeting packet, you must submit it at least one week in advance of the meeting date.

### **Can I contact commissioners individually by email or phone?**

If you would like to individually contact a commissioner, please email or call the HRC staff liaison and they will help you determine the best way to connect. Email or call the staff liaison, Alayna Cruz, at [alayna.cruz@cityofpaloalto.org](mailto:alayna.cruz@cityofpaloalto.org) or (650) 463-4906.

## **Who can attend a meeting?**

All members of the public are welcome to attend. There are no age restrictions.

## **How do I make a public comment at a HRC meeting?**

The public may participate in the meeting during public comment by attending in-person or by Zoom. Those who wish to participate virtually or by phone can find the instructions at the beginning and end of each agenda. To ensure participation in a particular item, we suggest calling in or connecting online 15 minutes before the item you wish to speak on.

If you attend in person, fill out a Speaker Card and hand it to the meeting clerk. When filling out the card, write your name (or initials - you have the right to not identify yourself) and the agenda item number that you want to speak about. The Chair of the meeting will give directions on how long the clerk will accept Speaker Cards.

## **When can I make a public comment during a HRC meeting?**

At the beginning of each meeting there is an opportunity for the public to make comments on any item **not** on the agenda. On the agenda this time is listed as “Public Comment” and generally occurs directly after the Call to Order/Roll Call.

There is also a time for public comment during agenda business items. The Chair will let the public know when the speaking time will occur and will set a time limit per speaker. Generally, speakers are given two to three minutes to make their comments. The Chair will stop the speaker after the time allotted is complete.

## **What is expected during public comment on an agenda business item?**

The general structure of a business agenda item is as follows: Presentation, Commissioner Questions, Public Comment, Commissioner Discussion, then (if it is an action item) Motions. During public comment, speakers are directed to speak only to the agenda item. Each person who turned in a speaker card may comment once. After public comment is closed, there is no other time for the public to speak to the agenda item. We also ask that speakers refrain from singling out other speakers or responding directly to another speaker’s comments.

## **Can a group of individuals pool their time and appoint a spokesperson for public comment?**

If there is a group of people that would like to pool their time, they can appoint a spokesperson. The group must alert the commission clerk via email ([hrc@cityofpaloalto.org](mailto:hrc@cityofpaloalto.org)) at least twenty-four hours in advance of the meeting. All group members must be in attendance at the meeting in order for the spokesperson to have their time. At the meeting, the clerk will verify how many individuals are in the group. Spokespersons who are representing a group of five or more people will be given ten minutes. If the spokesperson wants to make a presentation, it must be submitted to the clerk twenty-four hours in advance.

## **Can I bring printed documents to give to the commissioners?**

If you bring documents to a meeting you must print enough to give to each commissioner (seven), two staff members, as well as at least ten copies for the public.

## **What are the conduct rules for public comment?**

The public has a right to make comments during the appropriate times and for the length of time determined by the Chair. The Palo Alto Municipal Code makes it unlawful for any person to:

- Disrupt conduct of a meeting
- Make threats against any person or against any public order and security while in the meeting space
- Use the meeting space during meetings for any purpose other than participating in or observation of the commission meeting

## **What is the procedure if someone engages in hate speech during their speaker time?**

The First Amendment of the United States Constitution prohibits the government from treating public speakers differently based on the content of their speech. Under the Constitution, hate speech is protected speech. Therefore, public bodies are not able to prohibit speech or punish speakers for making a biased and/or hate-filled statement, though general conduct rules can be enforced.

## **What is the timing for posting the minutes and video of the Meeting online?**

The video for the meeting is generally posted to the [HRC website](#) within 2 business days after the meeting. Videos are available directly after the meeting on the [City's YouTube Channel](#). Archives of past meetings are also found on the [MidPen Media Center's](#) website.

The minutes from a meeting are posted after they are approved. Minutes are approved at the next regularly scheduled meeting.