



**City of Racine, Wisconsin
Common Council**

AGENDA BRIEFING MEMORANDUM

COMMITTEE: From Executive Committee **ORDINANCE 0004-25**

AGENDA DATE: Common Council Agenda – September 16, 2025

DEPARTMENT: City Attorney's Office

Prepared By: City Attorney Scott R. Letteney

Reviewed By: N/A

SUBJECT: Communication presented by Alderman Weidner sponsoring Ordinance 0004-25 – Amended Public Comment Procedure, as amended by the Executive Committee at its September 2, 2025, meeting.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Proposed Ordinance 0004-25 – Amended Public Comment Procedure, would amend the Code of Ordinances regarding the rules for public comments during Common Council meetings. Specifically, it would amend Chapter 2, Article II, Division 3, Section 2-64(6)(b), of the Code of Ordinances by adding the following sentence to the language read by the clerk at the beginning of the public comment period: “We encourage you to submit any detailed concerns in writing to the city clerk’s office, where they can be properly documented and directed for response.”

Note: This is the language as recommended by the Executive Committee at its September 2, 2025, meeting.

BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS:

As it currently exists, Chapter 2, Article II, Division 3, Section 2-64(6)(b), of the Code of Ordinances sets forth the rules for persons addressing the Common Council during the Public Comments portion of Common Council meetings. If approved as proposed by Alderman Weidner, the limits on Public Comment would significantly be narrowed.

28 This is the *existing* language of Racine Ordinances section 2-64(6):

29 (6) Public comment, if any.

30 (a) Persons desiring to address the common council shall be limited to three minutes.

31 The public comment period shall be limited to a total of 30 minutes, unless
32 extended by the mayor with the concurrence of two-thirds of the common council
33 members present. Priority for those desiring to address the common council shall
34 first be given to residents of the City of Racine, next to non-residents who own or
35 operate a business within the City of Racine, and finally to all other persons, time
36 permitting. The clerk shall provide a sign-in sheet, which shall include an
37 indication whether the speaker resides or owns or operates a business within the
38 City of Racine

39 (b) Prior to the public comment period, the clerk shall read substantially the following
40 language:

41 The public comment segment is an opportunity for citizens to speak directly to the
42 common council. Speakers will limit their remarks to three minutes.

43 There shall be no dialogue or interaction between the speaker and elected officials
44 or staff. This time is not intended to be a debate or discussion.

45 The common council shall not hear personal complaints or attacks against any
46 city employee or elected official or any matter related to an individual claim,
47 citation, appeal, or lawsuit. Profane, disruptive, threatening, or conduct that
48 otherwise impedes the safe, orderly, and effective conduct of the common council
49 meeting is equally unacceptable during the public comment period as it is during
50 all other portions of city meetings. When a group of people representing one
51 viewpoint wishes to address the council, one person should be appointed the
52 designated speaker for the group. Candidates for public office may not use this
53 opportunity to campaign for office.

54 Speakers during the public comment period shall follow all rules of the common
55 council and rulings of the chair, including a decision to terminate the remarks if
56 the speaker does not adhere to these rules. Public comment shall be limited to
57 ideas or concerns regarding the City of Racine.

58 Under the *proposed* language, as amended by the Executive Committee, the rules for
59 Public Comment under Section 2-64(6)(b), the following sentence would be as the last sentence:

60 We encourage you to submit any detailed concerns in writing to the city clerk's
61 office, where they can be properly documented and directed for response.
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65 **BUDGETARY IMPACT:** None.

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67 **OPTIONS/ALTERNATIVES:**

68 To approve, modifying the rules for public comment.

69 To deny, declining to modify the rules for public comment.

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71 **RECOMMENDED ACTION BY THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:** To approve.

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73 **ATTACHMENT(S):** None.