



City of Racine, Wisconsin  
Common Council

**AGENDA BRIEFING MEMORANDUM**

**COMMITTEE:** To Be Referred

**ORDINANCE 0004-25**

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**AGENDA DATE:** Common Council Agenda for referral to committee – May 20, 2025

**DEPARTMENT:** City Attorney's Office

**Prepared By:** City Attorney Scott R. Letteney

**Reviewed By:** N/A

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**SUBJECT:** Communication presented by Alderman Weidner sponsoring Ordinance 0004-25 – Amended Public Comment Procedure.

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**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 as described in the Background and Analysis section of this Agenda Briefing Memorandum.

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**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.

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

(6) Public comment, if any.

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

The public comment period shall be limited to a total of 30 minutes, unless extended by the mayor with the concurrence of two-thirds of the common council members present. Priority for those desiring to address the common council shall

first be given to residents of the City of Racine, next to non-residents who own or operate a business within the City of Racine, and finally to all other persons, time permitting. The clerk shall provide a sign-in sheet, which shall include an indication whether the speaker resides or owns or operates a business within the City of Racine

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

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

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

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

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

Under the *proposed* language, the rules for Public Comment under Section 2-64(6)(b), would read as follows:

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

Public comment provides citizens an opportunity to share feedback with the common council. While common council members cannot engage in direct dialogue during this time, they are here to listen to your input. 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.

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**BUDGETARY IMPACT:** None.

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**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 ALDERMAN WEIDNER:** To approve.

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