

To: Members of the Common Council

From: [Isabel Piedmont-Smith](#), District 1

Date: May 31, 2024

Subj: Ordinance 2024-13, To amend Title 2 of the Bloomington Municipal Code entitled
“Administration and Personnel”

On April 30, a work session for Council Members was held to discuss the public comment rules and practices at our regular session meetings. At that work session, a majority of Council Members said that they would prefer a shorter, more predictable individual time limit for public commenters at the open public comment periods during regular sessions. Currently, according to BMC 2.04.380, there are 20 minutes set aside for public comments on non-agenda items at the beginning of the meeting and 25 minutes set aside at the end, allowing five minutes for each speaker. However, the chair of the meeting has the option to decrease the five-minute limit if more than four people wish to speak.

A few problems with this approach were identified during the work session. First, the current process leads to speakers not having a predictable time limit for their comments. Second, in order to determine whether the five-minute limit should be shortened, the chair must accurately ascertain how many people wish to speak, which is generally difficult since not everyone who wishes to speak may initially raise their hands to indicate they would like to do so.

I am bringing forward Ordinance 2024-13 to address these problems by putting a universal limit of three minutes per speaker on public comment regarding items not on the agenda. This is the same amount of time that we have, in practice, allowed members of the public to speak on items that ARE on the agenda. It is not lost on me that neither 20 minutes nor 25 minutes are easily divisible by three, but I also note that many speakers do not take the full time, and that some time is lost between speakers.

The revisions in Ordinance 2024-13 will require a subsequent revision to the Council’s document “Rules for Making Public Comment on Agenda & Non-Agenda Items.” Council Attorney/Administrator Stephen Lucas also suggested additional changes to this document to conform with state code.

I ask for your support of Ordinance 2024-13 and of the revisions to the “Rules for Making Public Comment” document. Thank you.