



Welcome

Benbrook City Council invites and welcomes all citizens to attend its meetings. The following is a brief description of Benbrook's form of government and important information about City Council meetings, including procedures for addressing the Council.

Council-Manager Form of Government

The City of Benbrook operates under the Council-Manager form of government, pursuant to State law, within the framework of the Benbrook Home Rule Charter, adopted by the citizens in 1983, and amended by Charter amendment elections.

Benbrook City Council consists of the Mayor and six other Councilmembers, elected at-large by the citizens for two-year terms on a staggered basis. The Council enacts legislation, adopts the annual budget, determines policy and appoints the City Manager, City Secretary, City Attorney, Municipal Court Judge, City Prosecutor, and City Boards and Commissions. The Mayor, as the chief elected official, presides over Council meetings and is recognized as the head of the City government for all ceremonial purposes. The City Manager, as the chief administrative and executive officer of the city, carries out policy and administers the day-to-day operation of the city.

City Council Meetings

The Benbrook Home Rule Charter and the Texas Open Meetings Act require all council meetings to be open to the public. However, on business regarding discussion on personnel matters, land acquisitions, legal matters, or other items provided by law, the council may meet in executive session. All votes on matters discussed in executive session must be made in an open public meeting.

Regular council meetings are held in the City Council Chambers at City Hall, at 7:30 p.m. on the first and third Thursday of each month. Before each regularly scheduled meeting, a Pre-Council worksession is held so council may receive information from city staff about items on the evening's agenda. No votes are taken at this time. Pre-Council worksessions usually begin at 7:00 p.m.

The council, on occasion, will call a special meeting or worksession as necessary and reserves the right to change the meeting place and date. Public notice of council meetings is made 72 hours in advance by posting the agenda at City Hall. In case of emergency or urgent public necessity, an emergency meeting may be called with two hours' notice in accordance with State law.

Agendas are posted to the city's website and are also available by request from the City Secretary's office. No formal action can be taken on any items not on the publicly posted agenda.

Open Meetings

Open Meetings Act allows the public to observe the open portion of a council meeting. However, the act does not entitle the public to choose the items to be discussed or to speak about items considered at an open meeting or to speak about items considered at an open meeting. Such a right only exists if a specific State law requires a public hearing on that item or requires that public comment be allowed on that issue. The Presiding Officer, however, may give members of the public an opportunity to speak about any issue.

Addressing City Council

Upon being recognized by the Presiding Officer, each person addressing council shall step up to the microphone and give his or her name in an audible tone of voice for the record. All discussion and presentations are to be directed to the council as a whole, and all questions shall be addressed to the Presiding Officer. No person, other than councilmembers or city staff and the person having the floor shall be permitted to enter any discussion, either directly or through the members of the council. Aside from public hearings, each citizen will only be allowed to address council once per meeting under Citizen Presentation or Informal Citizen Comments, to give citizens equal opportunity to address council.

Citizen Presentations

Citizens who wish to make a presentation to council must submit to the City Secretary a written request to be placed on the agenda under Citizen Presentation, no later than noon of the Thursday before the next regularly scheduled City Council meeting. Requests should clearly state the nature of the item, the desired action by City Council, and include any supporting material. The City Manager has the right to grant or deny the request based on information provided. In the event a request is denied; the City Manager will provide written notice to the requestor stating the reason for the denial.

Any person who addresses the City Council must limit his or her presentation to the issue(s) stated in the request. Citizen presentations are limited to one speaker for a time of not more than ten minutes. Any time spent by citizens in responding to the direct questions by councilmembers will not be counted against the citizen's time allotment. If following the prescribed time allotment, the Mayor may extend the presentation by a majority consensus of the City Council.

Informal Citizen Comments

There shall be included on the agenda of each council meeting an item labeled Informal Citizen Comments. Members of the public who wish to speak but who have not requested to be placed on the agenda may address the council on any issue at that time. However, councilmembers may not deliberate nor make any decision about an unposted issue. If an unposted issue is raised, the council has four options:

- A councilmember may respond with a statement of specific factual information or recite the city's existing policy on that issue.
- A city official may direct the person making the inquiry to visit with city staff about the issue.
- Council may offer to place the item on a future council agenda.
- Council may offer to post the matter as an emergency item if it meets the criteria for an emergency posting.

Citizen comments shall be limited to a maximum of three minutes. Any time spent by the citizen in responding to direct questions by councilmembers will not be counted against the citizen's time allotment. In order to eliminate redundant comments, groups are encouraged to select a spokesperson to present the views of the group.

Complaints or discussion about individual councilmembers, city staff, or other persons would be out of order and will not be heard by council during the meeting. Charges or complaints about specific individuals shall be presented in writing to the Mayor or City Manager, as appropriate.

Public Hearings

A public hearing is a scheduled item on an open meeting agenda which is established to review and discuss items such as zoning proposals; final plans for planned development; special use permits; annexations; utility easement, building setback, and street vacation request. The purpose of a public hearing is to allow interested parties and citizens to have an opportunity to be heard, to present evidence relevant to an application, and to rebut evidence presented by others.

Decorum

At the request of the Presiding Officer, all persons shall be silent. If, after receiving a warning from the Presiding Officer, a person persists in disturbing the meeting, said Officer may order the person to leave the meeting. If that person does not leave the meeting, the Presiding Officer may order a Public Safety Officer to remove the person. Any person who resists removal by a Public Safety Officer shall be charged with violating Section 42.05 of Vernon's Annotated Penal Code.

If in the event that any meeting is willfully disturbed by a group of persons so as to render the orderly conduct of such meeting unfeasible, and when order cannot be restored by the removal of individuals who are creating the disturbance, the meeting may be adjourned and the remaining business considered at the next regular meeting, or it may be recessed to a set time and date.

If the matter being addressed before adjournment demands immediate attention, the Presiding Officer or other authorized person(s) may call a special meeting. In accordance with City Charter or State law.

As a Courtesy

When attending city council meetings, please

- Respect that the council represents all Benbrook citizens.
- Observe written rules of order. Wait until recognized by the Presiding Officer to speak.
- Listen with an open mind when others are speaking.
- Address the merits of issues.
- Avoid personal attacks on members of city council, city staff and others in the audience.

Correspondence

To communicate with council in writing rather than appearance at meetings, please submit correspondence to: City of Benbrook, P.O. Box 26569, Benbrook, Texas 76126-0565.