

TO: City Council
FROM: Kurt Hodgen
DATE: December 20, 2016
RE: Amending and reenacting Section 2-2-23

Summary: Consider amending and reenacting Section 2-2-23 of the Harrisonburg City Code, General order of business

Background: During the December 13, 2016 council meeting brief discussion was held regarding the movement of the “comment from the public” period on the agenda. Section 2-2-23 was last amended August 8, 2006 when council took action to add a new subsection immediately following the Pledge of Allegiance, titled “comments from the public”. Prior to the amendment, public comment was allowed under the “other matters” portion of the agenda, which is just prior to “boards and commissions” and “adjournment”. As is the case now, public comment was limited to five minutes, on matters, which are not on the regular agenda.

Key Issues: The “comment from the public” period varies in length due to the number of citizens that speak and/or how many of the speakers reach the five minute limit. The result has been many occasions where those present for public hearing have had to wait for quite a while for the hearings to be held and where outside organizations and/or citizens that are on the agenda have had to wait an extended period of time to have their matters heard. When researching other localities it was determined that more of those who allow public comment do so at or near the end of their meetings than at the beginning.

Environmental Impact: N/A

Fiscal Impact: N/A

Prior Actions: N/A

Alternatives: (a) amend the code to move the “comment from the public” period to a different place on the agenda; or
(b) do not amend the ordinance at this time

Community Engagement: N/A

Recommendation: City staff recommends amending the ordinance placing the “comment from the public” period as a subsection of “other matters” on the agenda as was previously practiced.

Attachments: N/A

Review: *The initiating Department Director will place in Legistar, in sequence of transmittal, the names of each department that must initial their review in order for this item to be placed on the City Council agenda. The completion of review only addresses the readiness of the issue for Council consideration. This does not address the recommendation for approval or denial of the issue. ###*