



# City of Pensacola

222 West Main Street  
Pensacola, FL 32502

## Memorandum

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**File #:** 18-00461

City Council

12/13/2018

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### **ADD-ON LEGISLATIVE ACTION ITEM**

**SPONSOR:** Grover C. Robinson, IV, Mayor

**SUBJECT:**

IMPROVING PUBLIC TRUST IN GOVERNMENT THROUGH TRANSPARENCY AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

**RECOMMENDATION:**

That City Council mandate its boards and commissions to solicit public input and participation in meetings before board action is taken.

**HEARING REQUIRED:** No Hearing Required

**SUMMARY:**

I stand for a government that is participatory and transparent. I stand for building and ensuring public trust in government through increasing and improving opportunities for public participation in government. I support public engagement to the greatest extent possible consistent with the principles and goals of transparency and good government. I champion empowering citizens to bring the benefit of diverse perspectives and knowledge to the government decision making arena. It is my firm belief that public input enhances government's effectiveness and improves the quality of its decisions.

The public should have a say in decisions about actions that could potentially affect their lives. The role of our boards is not to rubber stamp projects and sing an applicant's praises. Likewise, it is not enough for our boards to simply "check the box" by having active observers in the room. True public engagement requires meaningful engagement. I assert that meaningful public engagement is only possible through a practice that affords the public an opportunity to provide input **before** a decision is made.

One of my central missions as Mayor is to work together with City Council to ensure that our boards and commissions are leaders in good government and allow for inclusive public participation. I support establishing a mandate for our boards and commissions to follow which vigorously and unfailingly guarantees public input at every meeting and before an action or

decision is made by such board or commission. It is my recommendation that City Council require its boards and commissions to actively solicit public input and ensure meaningful participation in meetings before board action is taken. I ask that City Council communicate the following expectations of conduct to the boards and commissions it regulates:

No action or decision in a public meeting shall be taken prior to the chair of a board or commission calling on the public to come forward and provide public input, as desired by the public.

Specifically, it shall be the absolute duty of the chair of a board or commission, **before** calling for an action or decision, to: 1) **clearly and audibly** request public input; and 2) provide those members of the public desiring to provide input the opportunity to do so.

A citizen alleging that members of the public were not given a reasonable opportunity to be heard before a board or commission may bring their concerns to the applicable board or commission, the Mayor and City Council.

**PRIOR ACTION:**

None.

**FUNDING:**

N/A

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

N/A

**CITY ATTORNEY REVIEW:** Yes

12/7/2018

**STAFF CONTACT:**

Christopher L. Holley, City Administrator  
Lysia H. Bowling, City Attorney

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1) None.

**PRESENTATION:** No

