

Levesque, Jennifer

From: Michael Belluomini [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, January 19, 2021 9:52 AM
To: Levesque, Jennifer
Cc: Serratto, Matthew; Blake, Kevin; Shelton, Delray; Echevarria, Fernando; Bertha Perez; Jesse Ornelas; Sarah Boyle
Subject: AGENDA ITEM K.5 PRESS AND SPEAKER LOCATION IN CHAMBERS

Jennifer Please have this email read aloud under agenda item K.5 Removal of Portable Speaking Podium.

The council is considering whether to provide the newspaper representatives a regular station to sit at during the city council meetings. I believe the Merced County Times and the Merced Sun Star newspapers are a vital link of information to many people in Merced. These two newspapers of general circulation in the City of Merced provide an important function in the democratic process of local government by providing information to the public and a platform for discussion of local issues through the letters to the editor. Therefore I urge you to provide a regular place in the City Council Chambers for the representatives of these two newspapers to sit , and work on reporting council activity.

The council is considering where the public should stand when speaking during a City Council meeting. When members of the public are speaking at a council meeting the interaction should be between the speaker and those on the dais, that is the council members, the city manager and the city attorney. There is a strong temptation for speakers to direct their comments to the audience in the chambers especially if the matter being discussed is controversial and there are supporters of the speakers position in the audience. Such interaction leads to people speaking out of turn and disruption of the public hearing meeting process. This has happened in the last year. Public participation is very important and should be encouraged but it should always be directed to the council . Therefore I urge you to continue the current practice of having members of the public speak from the portable podium while facing the council not facing the audience.

Michael Belluomini

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