

To : Merced City Council

January 19, 2021

From : Michael Belluomini

Ref: Meeting Formats K.7

A public meeting or hearing requires that anyone interested hear all that is being communicated to the council members.

On Dec. 9 and Jan 4 the public was denied hearing my comments. The Planning Commission held a public hearing on a subdivision map approval. I submitted a memo asserting the design violated the General Plan policies. Though the memo was given to the Commissioners, it was not read aloud for the viewing public on TV . Furthermore the developer replied to my memo in writing but that was not shared with me or the public .

The council held a meeting to consider replacing the median with parking on "N" St. I commented by memo, though the memo was given to council members, it was not read aloud to the viewing public. The public has the right to know . So the format should require that comments submitted be read aloud.

The current format makes it difficult to participate. Comments must be submitted five hours before the meeting. It discourages participation. The city councils in Manteca, Clovis, and Lodi, accept emails and voicemails up to two hours before the meeting.

The length of public comment changed a year ago from 500 to 300 words, and from five minutes per speaker if there were less than four speakers on an item to three minutes for all speakers. For complicated matters these limits stifle providing council information regarding how the proposal impacts the neighbors, the environment, safety, or the General Plan.

Why don't we do it like other cities? In Turlock, Madera, Fresno, Lodi, Manteca and Stockton the public is allowed to Ecomment or participate through Zoom in real time as the meeting is going on.