



Over-the-Rhine Community Council
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May 12, 2020

(Note: sent via email to citycouncil@cincinnati-oh.gov)

Subject: Restoring Effective Public Comments Under Emergency Rules

Dear Members of City Council:

Over-the-Rhine Community Council Board of Trustees voted on May 11, 2020 to send this letter asking City Council to take action to restore effective public comments to city Council, city Council committees, Planning Commission, and Historic Conservation Board meetings.

The new rules, in the current health emergency, do not allow for effective, timely or interactive public comments to be presented to city officials.

The closing of the city meetings to members of the public has effectively eliminated the ability of citizens to be heard by decision-makers as well as their neighbors. Citizens are unable to exercise their free speech rights at these public meetings by virtue of the new rules.

There are technology solutions that the city can employ that would increase some transparency of city council decision making and allow the public to speak before their elected leaders and other citizens. Other cities have taken this step using video conferencing platforms and webinars.

All written comments should be published so that council members and citizens alike can see the comments. The comments should be published with the agenda and with the minutes.

This is an important policy issue—elected officials should enact policies and procedures that ensure citizens can address their elected representatives in open forums that are available to all.

Sincerely,

Maurice Wagoner
President, Over-the-Rhine Community Council

c: City Council
City Manager
Clerk of Council
Mayor