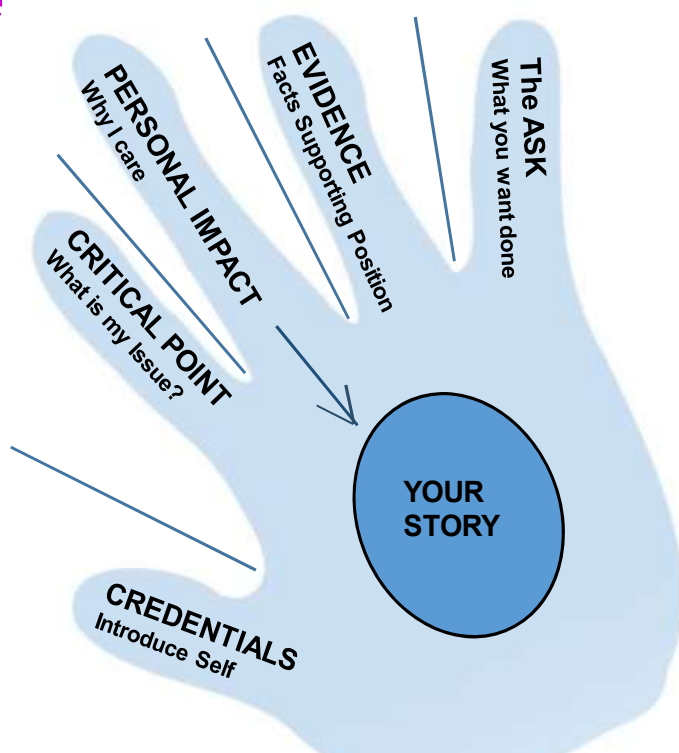


A "HANDy" Guide for Crafting Your Message



The "HANDy Guide to Crafting Your Message" is a simple way to remember the essential elements of effective testimony.

1. Introduce yourself. Tell your name, where you live, that you are a constituent. If you are advocating for an organization, state its name and (briefly) its purpose.
2. What is my issue? State the issue or critical point you want to make. I am here to talk about . . . Be specific if there is a bill number you are asking the legislator to support, if applicable.
3. Why do you care about this issue? What is your story about the impact of this issue on your life or on someone you know.
4. What evidence do you have? What are the facts, the data supporting your position. Giving facts provides the legislator with reasons why he/she can support the bill.
5. Make the ask. Specifically what do you want your legislator to do? Will he/she co-sponsor the bill? What will he/she do to bring the bill to a vote? This is where you get to ask for accountability from your legislator and determine what your next steps need to be.

Finally, thank them for their work and for meeting with you.

Writing a strong testimony – a quick guide to telling your story

1. The basics...who are you? Name, where you live, any affiliation

2. Why are you here?

(What made you decide to testify? What put a fire in your belly? What difference do you want to make?)

3. What is the most important thing you want the Commissioners to hear and remember?

(After you speak, this is the one point you want people to remember about your testimony.)

4. What evidence do you have to illustrate your point? (Researched and fact-based, please.)

5. Do you have a story that illustrates your point? Can you tell it in 1 minute?

6. So what? Why does this matter? What will happen if nothing changes? How will this benefit the community?

7. Finally, what do you want the Commissioners to do, or consider, or change? What is your ask?

(Say it clearly as your conclusion, then say thank-you.)

BEFORE THE HEARING:



Determine the purpose and tone of the public meeting.



Find out about the requirements for giving testimony.



Who else might be expected to participate on the issue, for or against? Many or few?



Take time to know the name of leader (Chair, President, etc.) and how to address council or board.

PREPARE A WRITTEN STATEMENT:

- Identify yourself – Name address, perhaps voting precinct.
- State your position... Give a one line preview at the beginning ... “I support or disagree with...”
- If possible, give the agenda number/name of the issue.
- Be brief.
- Be courteous.
- State your strongest supporting facts and give evidence.
- Personal stories resonate often better than facts and figures.
- Frame your position with how it will benefit the community and beyond.
 - What problem will it solve?
 - What benefit will it create?
- Address any false information.
- Restate your position/point.
- Thank them for considering your view.
- Send a copy by email and/or regular mail; make extra copies for oral testimony.

PRACTICE YOUR SPEECH:

1 minute = 150 words
(You may speak more quickly.)

Prepare several versions.
Short and shorter!

Do NOT be surprised by time limits.
More speakers may mean a shorter time limit.
Usually 2 to 3 minutes,
up to 5 minutes if you represent an organization

AT THE PUBLIC HEARING:

1. You will speak in the order in which you have signed up.
2. Strategize on your position for testifying – usually best to be one of the first.
3. You will be recorded. Adjust microphone. Identify yourself.
4. State your position and if possible give the agenda name/number of the issue.
5. Deliver your shortened, prepared speech.
6. If your points have already been made, simply agree with whomever came before and try to use a new twist to restate the position.
7. If you have maps or photos, be certain that these have been submitted ahead of your testimony.
8. Conclude by restating your position.
9. Thank the Council, Board or Commission for listening.

Public Testimony is usually one way – Do NOT expect a response.

AT THE HEARING IN AUDIENCE:



Listen to others carefully.



Be respectful and do not signal your feelings as others testify.



Record any relevant facts.



Look for the press – if possible connect afterward, to see if your position made an impact.



If many are testifying, the Council may call for a continuance or reduce speaking times. Show patience.