February 12, 2026

Mayor Henriquez
Commissioner Castillo
Commissioner Carey
Commissioner Haskell
Commissioner Kaufman
Commissioner Lee
Commissioner Veliz

Re: Agenda Item #28: Proposed Resolution to Amend City Commission Rules of Procedure

Dear Mayor Henriquez & Commissioners,

Last Stand supports efficient, well-run public meetings and procedures that allow the Commission to conduct business effectively. The current process has functioned well while allowing and promoting public participation. This should be recognized as a strength, not a problem to be solved. The proposed rule changes, however, undermine meaningful public participation under the guise of efficiency. In doing so, it sends a message that public input is tolerated as a formality, rather than integral to the decision-making process.

The resolution would disproportionately burden civic organizations like Last Stand and others that represent members across a range of public concerns by restricting speakers to a single three-minute comment at the start of the session. Residents who wish to address multiple items are forced to divide limited time across unrelated issues, creating a structural penalty on organized civic participation.

The proposed changes would require public comment to occur before the agenda is approved, creating both practical and civic concerns:

In practical terms, residents could be prevented from responding to items added later, and comments could occur hours before the relevant discussion, weakening their relevance and impact. Decisions made earlier in the meeting can also shape later outcomes, meaning the public would be commenting without full context.

On a more fundamental level, this structure removes any real reason for residents to remain in the room and risks turning public meetings into exercises conducted before empty chairs. It prompts an unavoidable question about whose interests are served when the public is no longer in the room.

Additional concerns with the proposed resolution include:

Limiting Public Input on Important Discussions:

- The rules give the Mayor discretion to allow public comment on discussion items if a "strong public interest" is demonstrated. However, the resolution provides no clear way for that interest to be expressed, creating a circular and impractical standard that invites inconsistency and perceived bias; without objective criteria, similarly situated speakers may be treated differently.
- Significantly, this provision is conceptually inconsistent with another element of the proposal stating that public comment alone is not grounds to remove an item from the consent agenda. This implies that even demonstrated public interest does not make an issue worthy of public deliberation, which undermines trust in the proposed rules and discretionary power afforded to the Mayor.
- Limiting comment unless "strong public interest" is shown suggests that participation is a privilege granted to majorities rather than a right afforded to individuals. It risks devaluing the voices of residents raising niche, technical, or controversial concerns, even though those issues often require the most scrutiny.
- Section 4(e) allows selective call-backs for additional comment, creating unequal participation opportunities.

Meetings During the Work Day

- Beginning evening sessions at 3:00 PM limits public access for working residents and families. The schedule favors those with flexible time and excludes many others.

Arbitrary Limits on Commissioner Speech & Policy Deliberation

- A five-minute limit on commissioner comments risks silencing important discussion and rushing complex matters, inevitably limiting commissioners' ability to raise detailed concerns or ask difficult questions on the record; commissioners are tasked with decisions that may shape the City for decades and involve hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars. It is difficult to reconcile the scale of those decisions with arbitrary time limits that reduce matters of enormous consequence to cursory discussion.
- The proposal also concentrates unusual control over speech in a single office by allowing the Mayor to decide whether a commissioner may exceed the time limit. Vesting one elected official with authority to make value judgements on whether another elected official can engage in substantive discussion raises democratic concerns and creates the potential for improper influence, particularly in politically sensitive moments. Rules of procedure appropriately vest the Mayor with authority to run meetings, but public deliberation should be governed by neutral rules, not by increasing reliance on individual discretion.

Public meetings are one of the few places where residents can witness decision-making in real time and speak directly to those entrusted with power. That visibility and accessibility are not inconveniences to manage; they are the foundation of democratic legitimacy. A system that preserves robust participation strengthens trust. A system that restricts it weakens trust, even when done in the name of efficiency.

For these reasons, Last Stand respectfully urges the Commission to reject this resolution and preserve a meeting structure that affirms openness, fairness, and the principle that public governance should remain visibly and meaningfully public.

Respectfully,

Board of Directors
Last Stand