

June 21, 2016

Councilmember Richard Fimbres
Ward 5
4300 S. Park Avenue
Tucson, AZ 85714

Dear Richard,

You recently received, as background information for the June 21st Study Session, a copy of the *TRRG Report on Public Participation in Mayor and Council Meetings*.

This report was generated as a result of complaints brought to TRRG by some members.

The complaints were concerning:

- a) people unable to get in to the meeting on occasions when there are controversial subjects on the agenda;
- b) perceived bias in the selection of who may address the Council;
- c) many people who want to speak are not able to do so because the allotted time runs out, both for Call to the Audience and Public Hearings, when important subjects are on the agenda.
- d) all of this leading to a sense that citizen input is not valued.

In addition, TRRG feels that Calls to the Audience and Public Hearings are prime contact points with the public for implementing two of Mayor and Council adopted Plan Tucson's Governance and Participation goals:

G2 - Offer opportunities for productive public engagement in City policy, program, and project initiatives from the beginning of and throughout the planning and decision-making process.

G3 - Emphasize interactive participation methods that solicit input from the public and provide feedback to the public on input received and how it was used.

We studied how council meetings are carried out (both currently and in the past), listed some options for addressing these concerns, *and chose for our recommendations those options which maximized citizen input*. BUT, several other options were listed, and some comments **were** made with respect to their level of acceptability, in terms of addressing the above concerns.

The City has made some changes in procedure since we first brought the issue of access to the meeting room to their attention in December 2015, which have alleviated that issue, even though there was still a problem with persons not being able to get in to the meeting room in January of this year. The use of a new venue for the April meetings was, however, well carried

out. We would like to see those changes in procedure for overflow conditions codified in the Mayor and Council Rules and Regulations.

We have asked that the Study Session discussion of our report be postponed so that you and your staff could have more opportunity to look into the issues we raise and we could have an opportunity to meet with you to learn how you think the current processes could best be modified so as to address the above concerns.

We need your help and advice. If you think the recommendations we proposed are unworkable or simply not the right ones, we would like to hear your suggestions as to how to modify the way in which Council meetings are currently carried out, to address the above concerns and better achieve Plan Tucson Governance and Participation goals.

The City Manager's memo accompanying this report in the agenda materials spoke only to our recommendations, said none of them were legally mandated because current rules already handle the issue (neglecting to say that the actions concerning access have not always been followed). However, the other concerns we started with, also sources of public discontent, are not being addressed. Also, the City Manager did not include goals G2 and G3 in the Plan Tucson Considerations section of his June 21 Memorandum, which are very relevant here.

We have studied these issues and offer some possible changes in the rules which would address these concerns. For example, we found that the number of hours per month devoted to Call to the Audience has been reduced by a factor of 4 from what it was ten years ago - leading citizens to wonder whether their input matters.

We look forward to meeting with you and learning how you would address these concerns. We will be calling your office to schedule a meeting.

Sincerely,

J D Garcia
for the TRRG Task Force