Best Practices for Speaking in Public

Do’s:

• Stay positive
• If you’re nervous, bring someone with you for moral support
• Talk in the public interest
• View this as a learning process
• Be respectful while others speak
• If you don’t know the answer to a question, it’s okay to say “I don’t know!”
• Say Thank You!

Don’ts:

• Yell
• Place blame
• Threaten
• Speak for anyone else without permission
• Misrepresent the facts
• Burn Bridges
• Storm away

➢ Prepare what you want to say in advance, and bring a written copy with you to the meeting.
  o Keep it about 3 paragraphs or one page.
  o Practice your script and time yourself. Try to keep it under 3 minutes.

➢ Get to your location early to find parking, get through security, and find a seat in the room.
➢ Bring a sweater – it might be cold in the building
➢ Bring a bottle of water so you don’t get dehydrated

➢ There may be other items on the agenda and other speakers before you. When it is your turn to speak, your name will be called to come to the microphone.

➢ When you walk up, introduce yourself with confidence!
  o “Hello, my name is _____, and I live in (Council District or County Precinct). Thank you for taking the time to listen to me today……”
  o If you are there to represent an organization, you may mention this at the beginning.

➢ Explain why you are there.
  o Share your prepared comments.
  o Stay on topic.

➢ End with an ask. (And a thank you!)
  o Oftentimes, people will speak at a meeting but they don’t provide a clear question that needs to be answered.
  o When you end with an ask, you make it difficult for anyone to ignore you.

➢ It doesn’t hurt to send a thank you note or email after the meeting to the people you addressed, especially if your comments were well-received, if a vote was taken in your favor, or if you got the response you were looking for!