

**ORDINANCE TO ALLOW MEMBERS OF PUBLIC TO SIGN UP TO MAKE PUBLIC COMMENT
AT FULL COUNCIL MEETINGS UP UNTIL THE BEGINNING OF PUBLIC COMMENT**

AN ORDINANCE BY MATTHEW CHARLES CARDINALE

AN ORDINANCE TO CITY OF ATLANTA CODE OF ORDINANCES, PART II (ORDINANCES), CHAPTER 2 (ADMINISTRATION), ARTICLE II (COUNCIL), DIVISION 2 (MEETINGS), SUBDIVISION II (RULES OF PROCEDURE), SECTION 2-104 (REMARKS FROM PUBLIC), TO ALLOW MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC UP UNTIL THE BEGINNING OF THE PUBLIC COMMENT SECTION OF THE AGENDA TO SIGN UP TO SPEAK; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

WHEREAS, the City Council of Atlanta encourages the participation of members of the public in the legislative process, including by making public comment at meetings of the City Council and its committees; and

WHEREAS, the City Council desires to make the public comment opportunity in its meetings accessible to as many members of the public as possible and to remove barriers to their participation in local democracy; and

WHEREAS, the City of Atlanta Code of Ordinances currently provides, in Section 2-104, that members of the public must sign up to speak before the beginning of the meeting, which is scheduled to take place at 1 p.m.; and

WHEREAS, per the same section, the Municipal Clerk's office puts out the sign-in sheet at 12:30 p.m.; and

WHEREAS, the City Council often hears at its Full Council Meetings several proclamations of varying length prior to the beginning of public comment, such that public comment often does not begin until as late as 1:30 p.m., 2 p.m., or even later; and

WHEREAS, it can be burdensome for members of the public to be at City Hall between 12:30 and 1:00 p.m. to sign up to speak, then wait what can be an hour or more until their public comment opportunity; and

WHEREAS, giving members of the public longer to sign up to speak will result in the ability of more members of the public to address the City Council; and

WHEREAS, giving members of the public options to participate in democracy that take up less of their time will reduce barriers to participation, especially barriers faced by working people and small business owners, who have competing priorities during normal working hours;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ATLANTA, GEORGIA, as follows:

SECTION 1: That Part II (Ordinances), Chapter 2 (Administration), Article II (Council), Division 2 (Meetings), Subdivision 2 (Rules of Procedure), Section 2-104 (Remarks from Public), section (a), which currently reads as follows:

“(a) The council shall only hear remarks from those members of the public who sign up to speak prior to the convening of each regularly scheduled council meeting. The sign-up sheets or speaker cards will be made available to the public, by the municipal clerk, at the entrance of the council chambers or other authorized meeting location 30 minutes prior to the scheduled council meeting time; and sign up will terminate upon the convening of each meeting with the lists or cards delivered to the presiding officer at that time. Each person shall be allowed to speak for a maximum of two minutes.

Any member of the public may speak to the council on matters of public concern, including matters of general policy, efficiency and the conduct of city government, provided that the president may rule out of order personal, abusive or indecorous language, or matters that the city has no purview over. No person shall cede his/her time to another person who has not previously signed up to speak. However, a speaker may yield his/her time to another speaker on the list; provided that the person to whom time has been yielded may be placed at the end of the speakers' list; provided, however, that no speaker to whom time has been yielded shall speak for more than 16 minutes.”

is hereby amended, to read as follows:

“(a) The council shall only hear remarks from those members of the public who sign up to speak prior to the beginning of the public comment section of each council meeting. The sign-up sheets or speaker cards will be made available to the public, by the municipal clerk or his or her designee, at the entrance of the council chambers or other authorized meeting location at least 30 minutes prior to the scheduled council meeting time; and sign up will terminate upon the beginning of the public comment section of the meeting, with the final lists or cards delivered to the presiding officer at that time. Upon request by the presiding officer prior to the beginning of public comment, the municipal clerk or his or

her designee shall provide the presiding officer with sign-up sheets or cards containing the names of those persons signed up to speak so far as of that time. Each person shall be allowed to speak for a maximum of two minutes.

Any member of the public may speak to the council on matters of public concern, including matters of general policy, efficiency, and the conduct of city government, provided that the president may rule out of order personal, abusive, or indecorous language; or matters over which the city has no purview. No person shall cede his/her time to another person who has not previously signed up to speak. However, a speaker may yield his/her time to another speaker on the list; provided that the person to whom time has been yielded may be placed at the end of the speakers' list; provided, however, that no speaker to whom time has been yielded shall speak for more than 16 minutes."

SECTION 2: Except as otherwise provided, the provisions of Section 1 are effective as of the date of adoption of this legislation.

SECTION 3: That all ordinances and parts of ordinances in conflict herewith are hereby waived to the extent of the conflict.