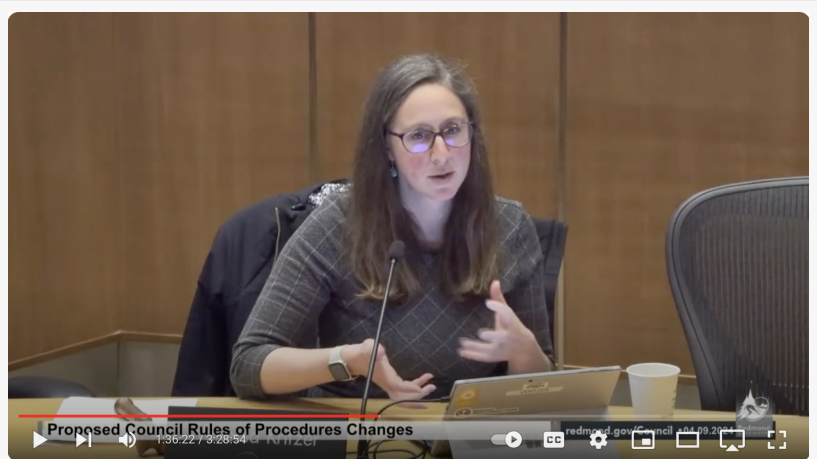


Redmond City Council Doubles Down on Curbing Democracy

Redmond City Council moves to limit public comments, including expel and ban the public from making comments or attending council meetings for up to 6 months.

REDMOND, WA, UNITED STATES, April 11, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Facing rising public criticism during public comment periods at regular council meetings, Redmond City Council moves to impose strict rules on public comments, making giving public comments at Redmond City Council meetings both difficult and intimidating. Among the limitations are:



Redmond City Council President Vanessa Kritzer advocates for limiting public comment right under the guise of transparency.

- Cutting down the public comment time from 3 minutes to 1 minute. “All speakers must conclude their public comments when the applicable time-period ends. Any public comments made after the conclusion of the provided time are considered disruptive and may result in removal of the speaker from the meeting. ”

“

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Councilmember Jeralee Anderson

- The public is limited on what they can comment on. Any deviation from “the City Business initially identified on the sign-in sheet” “will be deemed to be disruptive and the commenter will be asked to end their comments.”
- Allowing any councilmember to “terminate” public comments, even ban the public from giving public comments or attending council meetings from 4 weeks to half year.

After Redmond City Council rushed, without allowing any public input, to authorize giving away public land to Plymouth Housing, a NGO with \$321 million in assets (2022 Form 990 data) and reportedly handing out needles and pipes to its tenants, for the development of a drug-

permitted homeless building in downtown Redmond, frustrated residents resorted to using the twice-per-month public comment period at regular council meetings to raise their concerns. The Redmond city council is still refusing to hold any public hearings. The public comment period is mandated by state law. And it has become the only venue where the public can speak directly to the council and have their concerns recorded for the records.

The city council's sudden move came at a very sensitive time when the community is organizing a big turnout at the Tuesday, April 16th council meeting. The big turnout on the 16th will be the second organized large scale community turnout to address the council and bring attention to the issues of transparency, democracy, and public safety. Community members packed the city council room on March 19th, and more than 40 people gave public comments. All were peaceful and civil. Some people spoke in tears when talking about their disappointment about the lack of government transparency in the past 5 years.

Despite the public's plea for transparency and democracy, Redmond City Council, led by Council President Vanessa Kritzer and Council Vice President Jessica Forsythe, discussed the proposed new rules on public comments at the [council study session on April 9th](#).

Councilmember Melissa Stuart felt strongly about regulating public comments via the city's legislative body. She said, "It is our council meeting... it is our meeting." She repeatedly pushed back on any reservations to cut down public comment time from 3 minutes to 1 minute. Despite Mayor Birney clearly stating that "you can always rearrange the agenda to get the business done and still have time for public comment," Stuart pressured the council and said that the current council rules do not allow business to be considered after 10:30 pm. What she failed to say was that the exact council rules she referred to allow for flexibility if the Council members present agree to continue or if there are ongoing matters that need to be resolved before the meeting can adjourn.

Councilmember Jeralee Anderson raised her concerns and said, "I find this conversation very challenging that we are using our operating rules to manage other people's behaviors, speeches and interactions with us while we also already limit our interaction to with them during the meeting. We might want to look first in the mirror. This is not a court. By our own rules and disclaimer, we are also able to break our own rules of decorum, so We can just shout out whenever we didn't feel that was OK" . However, the council voted 4 to 3 to use their legislative power to regulate the public's 'behaviors, speeches, and interactions' with the council.

An online petition calling for Council President Vanessa Kritzer to resign or be removed from the leadership role has gained over 500 signatures from registered voters in Redmond.

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