

**From:** [acrane@comcast.net](mailto:acrane@comcast.net) on behalf of [President@lwvalameda.org](mailto:President@lwvalameda.org)  
**To:** [Marilyn Ezzy Ashcraft](#); [Tony Daysog](#); [Tracy Jensen](#); [Trish Spencer](#); [Malia Vella](#)  
**Cc:** [City Clerk](#); [Manager Manager](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Re: Item 7-D, Amendments To Rules of Order -- Date of Hearing: October 3, 2023  
**Date:** Friday, September 29, 2023 9:38:28 AM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)

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Dear Mayor Ezzy Ashcraft, Vice Mayor Daysog, and Councilmembers Vella, Spencer, and Jensen:

The League of Women Voters of Alameda cares deeply about open and transparent government. We appreciate the City Council's ongoing efforts to establish rules which allow for public input while balancing the need to conduct effective meetings. We are concerned that aspects of the proposed changes do not advance that goal.

The purpose of the consent calendar is to dispose of routine and non-controversial items efficiently. The ability of both Council members and the public to address items in the consent calendar which should not be accepted without clarification or debate is crucial to the democratic process.

The proposed rules give the public an opportunity to comment on the consent calendar before Council members have pulled items or expressed their concerns. That prevents the public from addressing the calendar in its modified form and in consideration of Council comments. We suggest that the public be afforded time to comment on consent calendar items, including requests to pull items for full discussion, after the Council members have pulled or clarified items.

Sincerely,  
Anna Crane  
President, LWVA

**From:** [Alameda Citizens Task Force](#)  
**To:** [Marilyn Ezzy Ashcraft](#); [Tony Daysog](#); [Trish Spencer](#); [Malia Vella](#); [Tracy Jensen](#)  
**Cc:** [Manager Manager](#); [Yibin Shen](#); [City Clerk](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Re: Item 7-D on City Council Oct. 3, 2023, Agenda' Amendments to Rules of Order  
**Date:** Wednesday, September 27, 2023 2:55:33 PM

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# ACT

## Alameda Citizens Task Force

### Vigilance, Truth, Civility

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Dear Mayor Ashcraft, Vice-Mayor Daysog and Council Members Vella, Spencer, and Jensen:

We must object to the significant reduction of public comment time and the amendment of the Consent Calendar Rules to move any item “pulled” from the Consent Calendar until after disposition of regular agenda items. We also propose an additional amendment to the Consent Calendar Rules.

**Proposed Public Comment Limits:** Until May 15, 2018, City Council had very simple and straight forward rules with regard to public comment. A member of the public had three minutes to speak on any item. The Consent Calendar procedure also provided that if any member of the public or a Council Member desired to speak on an item it was “pulled” from the Consent Calendar and placed at the beginning of the regular agenda.

Since that time, a Council majority has consistently eroded the time allowed for public comment. The current Rules allow a member of the public to speak for two minutes on a non-agenda item, two minutes on all consent calendar items combined, and three minutes on a regular agenda item, unless there are more than six public commentators, which reduces speaking time to two minutes per speaker.

The above were drastic reductions. However, the current proposal reduces public input even more! The proposal actually increases speaking time for non-agenda and consent calendar items from two to three minutes (but only if there are not more than four speakers). However, it proposes to apply the two minute limit on regular agenda items if there are more than four speakers. ***Neither the staff report nor the draft Resolution contains any rationale for this reduction in speaking time. Do the City Manager and some Council Members not value public comment?***

Notwithstanding our strong disagreement with this proposal, we propose an amendment to the rules that makes much more sense. **Simply reduce the old straightforward and simple three minute rule with a 2 ½ minute rule for all agenda items without regard to the**

**number of speakers.** The current rule actually has the effect of limiting most comments two minutes or forces a speaker to prepare both two and three minute versions.

**Proposed Consent Calendar Rules:** We applaud the amendment that would allow a Council Member to speak up to three minutes on a Consent Calendar item to ask clarifying questions, make brief comments or register a "no" vote as an alternative to "pulling" the item from the Consent Calendar. This will be useful for a Council Member who simply wants to put his/her position on an item on the record without resorting to "pulling" it from the Consent Calendar. *We do think that the amendment needs language that makes it clear that the allowance is three minutes per item not three minutes for the entire consent calendar.*

However, we believe the additional proposal that any "pulled" item would not be heard until all the regular agenda items have been heard is impractical. Consent Calendar items often are time sensitive, like extension of contracts or leases, approval of collective bargaining agreements, etc. Moving them near the end of a meeting raises the risk that time constraints will lead to disposition being delayed several weeks. Even if held over, where would they appear on the next agenda?

**Our Proposed Amendment to Consent Calendar Rules:** The current Rule provides no specific sequence for calling for public comment on the Consent Calendar. The Mayor has chosen to call for public comment first and call for "pulls" after public comment is concluded. When the "pulled" item comes up for consideration she denies public comment on the grounds that public comment has already occurred, *even though that comment was limited to two minutes for all consent calendar items combined.*

**The purpose of "pulling" an item is because at least one Council Member believes that it is not "routine" and should be exposed to discussion and debate. Thus, it should be open to full public comment.** There is a simple solution, the Rule should be amended to require the Mayor or chairperson to first call for "pulls" and then call for public comment limited to the items remaining on the Consent Calendar, thus allowing full public comment on the pulled item when considered by Council.

We hope that Council will give serious consideration to our proposals.

Sincerely,

Alameda Citizens Task Force Board