



May 2, 2021

Mayor Ezzy Ashcraft, Vice Mayor Vella and Councilmembers Daysog, Herrera Spencer and Knox White

**RE: Agenda Item 6E – Rules of Order**

The Council will consider adopting a resolution revising the Rules of Order pertaining to referrals and Council Communications and amendments to the Council Referral process and form in Agenda Item 6 E on May 4, 2021.

The referral process allows council members to convince a majority of their colleagues that an issue has sufficient merit to be placed on a future council meeting agenda for full discussion and public comment. A discussion of this initial council request is not intended as an in-depth look at the item but entails brief, persuasive arguments.

While we are not ready to take a position on the time limits for speaking, we do urge the Council to adhere to the stated purpose of Council Referrals. The process prioritizes the work of the council and staff to those issues worthy of further consideration. And the staff review provides well informed background material for a full council discussion and public comment.

We welcome the change to only allow dispositive action on legislative matters that are sufficiently noticed as time-sensitive.

Susan Hauser, President  
League of Women Voters Alameda

**From:** [Alameda Citizens Task Force](#)  
**To:** [Marilyn Ezzy Ashcraft](#); [Malia Vella](#); [John Knox White](#); [Trish Spencer](#); [tdaysog@alamedaca.com](mailto:tdaysog@alamedaca.com); [Lara Weisiger](#)  
**Cc:** [Eric Levitt](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Alameda City Council May 4, 2021 Agenda Item 6-E Amendment of Referral Process  
**Date:** Friday, April 30, 2021 2:56:47 PM

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# *ACT*

## **Alameda Citizens Task Force**

### **Vigilance, Truth, Civility**

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

ACT objects to the recommendations of the Council sub-committee regarding revision of the Rules or Order pertaining to Council referrals which reduce presentation time from 10 minutes to 5 minutes and limitation of Council Member comments and questions from 9 minutes to 3 minutes each.

While it is true that a referral is only a preliminary step in the eventual placing of a matter on the regular agenda, the referral process is the only avenue open to Council Members to do so on their own initiative. They do have the alternative of asking the City Manager to place an item on the agenda, but the City Manager does not have to concur with any such request. Therefore, it is important that a Council Member have adequate opportunity to present an item and for the rest of Council to question, discuss, and perhaps suggest modifications that might change any agenda item eventually presented to staff.

It is our view that limiting the presentation and discussion of a referral to a formulaic one size fits all time constraint will not lead to the best end result. Some referrals will always require more time for presentation and discussion than others.

A very current case in point is the referral scheduled for the May 8th Special Council Meeting concerning police reform. If, on May 4, you change the Rules of Order to conform to the sub-committee recommendation, the Mayor and Council Member Vella will only have a total of five minutes for their presentation and Council will only have three minutes each for questioning and discussion!

We appreciate the sub-committee's desire to accomplish shorter meetings. However, in many cases it would be penny wise and pound foolish. It might lead to shorter meetings, but not allow critical community and Council discourse.

Sincerely,

Gretchen Lipow  
President

Alameda Citizens Task Force