



Press Release: City of Plymouth discontinues use of Zoom public comment for City Council and Planning Commission meetings

On October 26, 2023, the regular City Council meeting was “zoom bombed” by a group of individuals who spouted nasty and hateful, audio and visual messages. During this “zoom bomb”, the City’s zoom platform was hacked by these perpetrators and City staff was unable to stop it, or otherwise mute or cut-off the offending speakers.

Effective immediately, the City of Plymouth will no longer be using the public comment features on Zoom for City Council and Planning Commission meetings due to the increased incidences of “zoom bombing” Statewide. We are joining a rapidly growing list of local governments including Galt, Antioch, El Cerrito, Fremont, Modesto, Sacramento, Santa Rosa, Redwood City, and Sonoma County, among many others, that are taking this step of discontinuing virtual public comment.

Recognizing public input is guaranteed by the Brown Act, and that Freedom of Speech is a right broadly protected by the U.S. Constitution, we are taking this step to prevent further bad-faith abuses, and protect our residents and community members who want to participate in civic life in good faith, free from abject, explicit, and vulgar expressions of bigotry and hate.

While a legislative body has some ability to remove anyone who actually disrupts or interferes with the business of a meeting, it cannot do so merely because the speech is hateful or offensive. Unless the speech has no relationship to the subject matter jurisdiction of the City at all, such speech may only be ruled out of order if it is not done during the appropriate public comment time or is interruptive. Further, due to the nature of this being an online platform, even if someone is removed virtually for an actual interruption (as opposed to just saying things that are hateful) there is no preventing someone who has been virtually “removed” from simply “re-appearing” as a different user.

The City regrets the inconvenience that this change may cause for some members of the community who prefer to provide public comment virtually. We encourage the public to participate and share their views in-person at our meetings. Alternatively, members of the public can still submit written public comment by dropping off their comments at City Hall, by emailing their comments, or mailing their public comment to the City. Comments must be received before 3:30 PM on the day of the meeting.

- Meetings will continue to be live streamed on YouTube.

- Meetings of the City Council are on the 2nd and 4th Thursday of each month at 6:30 PM. Meetings of the Planning Commission are on the 1st and 3rd Thursday of the month at 6:30 PM.
- Meetings are conducted in the Council Chambers at City Hall at 9426 Main Street, Plymouth, California.
- Council Chambers are wheelchair accessible. Special accommodations may be requested by contacting the Deputy City Clerk at 209-245-6941, 72 hours in advance of the meeting.