

Purpose: Empower the community with resources to understand their role in effecting change.

Ways to engage with your local government

A. Emails

All of Council: CouncilMembers@SanMarcosTX.Gov

City Manager Executive Team: CMOExecTeam@SanMarcostx.Gov

City Manager: SReyes@SanMarcosTX.Gov

City Clerk: ETrevino@SanMarcosTX.Gov

B. Speak at a meeting (live/via zoom/have comments read by staff)

Citizen Comment: CitizenComments@SanMarcosTX.Gov

-Must email up until 12:00pm the day of the meeting

-If speaking in person you can sign up until 5:45pm at City Hall

-Talk about anything (Stuff you want to see/or that has happened, upcoming events, etc)

-Held at the start of the meeting

-Receive up to three minutes of speaking time

-City Council/Mayor/Staff does not respond, they may reference your statements later

Public Hearing: CitizenComments@SanMarcosTX.Gov

-Must email up until 12:00pm the day of the meeting

-If speaking in person you can sign up until 5:45pm at City Hall

-Talk about an agenda item

-Held after the consent agenda

-Required for certain types of projects to get your input

-Receive up to three minutes of speaking time

-City Council/Mayor/Staff does not respond, they may reference your statements later

Questions and Answers from the press and public

-Held at the end of the meeting

-Receive up to three minutes of speaking time

-City Council/Mayor/Staff may respond to your questions

C. Meet directly with City Manager, Mayor, or a Councilperson

D. Rally in person at City Hall or other visible locations

E. Open Records Requests

Used to get access to email communication and other documents that are open to the public.

Requires specific Date range, and "Documents of (Insert your topic)

F. SMTX Connect App/webpage

G. Strategies

Using a mixture of these approaches is the most effective

Getting speakers to show up always makes a difference

Gives people lots of ways to communicate in their comfort zone

H. Things to keep in mind

What are your strengths?

Count your wins, every single one of them

Some things are taken care of faster than others

Get comfortable with confrontation

How the San Marcos Government is organized, and where to best aim your activism:

City Manager

- Appointed by City Council
- Responsible for directing the workforce and programs of the city in accordance with ordinances, rules and regulations adopted by the city council.
- Can administratively approve agreements under \$50,000
- Oversees the Budget and City Operations
- Works with the Mayor to set the agenda
- Does not vote during meeting

City Council

- Elected in November, Run-offs in December (if no one candidate receives 51%)
- Earn about \$20,000 a year
- Serve three (3) year terms.
- Meet 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of each month and special meetings.
- Appoint and evaluate City Manager, City Clerk, City Attorney, Municipal Court Judge
- Appoint Mayor Pro-tem and Vice Pro-tem
 - >Help Mayor lead meetings or in their absence
 - >Serve on the Finance Committee
- Appoint Citizens to boards, commissions, committees
- Vote on Resolutions and Ordinances to change local policies and procedures
- Vote on the Budget
- Vote on the Property Tax Rate and establish fees
- Vote on Annexations and some Zoning changes
- Vote on Economic development incentives
- Vote on Police and Fire Meet and Confer contract
- Vote on Contracts and expenditures over \$50,000
- No administrative duties over City Staff

Mayor

- Earn about \$23,000 a year
- Elected in November, Run-offs in December (if no one candidate receives 51%)
- Serves two (2) year terms
- City Council duties and additional Mayoral duties
 - >Conducts the meeting
 - >Set the agenda with the City Manager
 - >Proclamations
 - >Appointed automatically to certain boards and commissions

Boards and Commissions

- Created by Council
- Council Appointed during regular meetings
- Council Committees contain at most 3 City Council Members, and supported by staff
- Citizen Committees contain community members, supported by staff
- Discuss and vote on resolutions and ordinances as recommendations before they come to Council, some never leave committee

City Charter

- Document that governs how the City is organized.
- Updates and Amendments voted on every 5 years by San Marcos residents
- The governing rules for the City, such as: Council member term lengths and powers, the powers and responsibilities of the City Manager, Police accountability, etc.

Meetings

Agendas

- Available online or you can get them at City Hall
- Set by the Mayor and City Manager
- Citizen Comment Period
 - >Start of the meeting
 - >Each person gets 3 minutes
 - >Capped at 10 people, but Council will typically vote to allow all speakers
 - >Say anything you like
- Consent Agenda
 - >Items that may have been discussed previously
 - >Contract renewals or purchasing items
 - >Can be all approved in a single motion without discussion or presentations
 - >Council Members can pull items from the Consent agenda to discuss
 - >Typically pulled items are discussed after the public hearings
- Public Hearings
 - >Items that require public presentations and outreach components
 - >Includes Zoning/Annexation, Federal/State funding allocations, etc.
 - >Typically posted in a newspaper to alert the community
 - >You cannot speak on this item if you already discussed it in citizen comments
- Non-Consent agenda
 - >Includes Zoning items, Council discussion items, appointments, etc.
- Executive Session
 - >Excludes the public
 - >Used to discuss sensitive information
 - >Includes Legal advice, staff discussions,

Meeting language (motions, tabling, etc)

- Motions begin discussion on an item, and require a “second” from a colleague
- Motions can include:
 - >Denial/ Approval: Starts the discussion on an item
 - >Amend: Used to change the item
 - >Table until ____: Stops conversation until a date in the future
 - >Call the Question: Stops debate and initiates voting

Types of agenda items

- Conditional Use Permits
- Zoning
- Annexation
- Economic incentives
- Budget requests
- Contracts
- Discussion items
- Land Development Code
 - >Governs development patterns according to zoning and land use category
 - >Updated every few years but can be amended any time
- Capital Improvement Plan
 - >Large drainage, infrastructure, or reconstruction projects
 - >Voted on by Planning and Zoning and City Council

Citizen Comments/Public Hearings/Questions and Answers with the Press and Public

- Various ways for the community to write in, speak up, and get answers

Voting

- Simple majority is Four (4) out of Seven (7)
- Super Majority is Six (6) out of Seven (7)
 - >Required when voting contrary to the recommendation of a lower board or commission
- Recusal to avoid conflict of interest

Process for idea to ordinance (resolution, policy, changes)

- Community member or Council person comes up with an idea for change →
- Does some research and finds out it is something that the Council can change →
- Contact Council members (Requires Two) to get it on an agenda →
- Mayor and City Manager decide when it gets placed on the agenda →
- Council discusses the topic at a regular meeting on the non-consent agenda →
- If it receives 4 votes then staff will prepare a future agenda item, if not then the item fails →
- Staff brings back recommended action and Council debates and decides →
- If it receives 4 votes the City Manager directs staff to carry out the change, if not then the item fails →
- The Council and the Public hold the City Manager accountable to carry out that change