



# *City of Tarpon Springs, Florida*

324 East Pine Street  
Post Office Box 5004  
Tarpon Springs, Florida 34689-5004  
(727) 938-3711  
Fax: (727) 937-8199  
[www.ctsfl.us](http://www.ctsfl.us)

## **City of Tarpon Springs Resident Engagement Guide**

**City of Tarpon Springs Officials and Staff want to hear what you have to say. The following information will help guide you in making the most effective presentation possible to by focusing on the following strategies:**

**❖ Participate ·❖ Partner ❖ Prepare ❖ Present**

### **What is Resident Engagement?**

**It is an opportunity for residents to express their opinions, views and concerns to City Government decision-makers on issues that affect their quality of life.**

**Your Voice does matter. Here are five important questions to help you make a connection with your city government:**

- 1. Who do you talk to about your opinions?**
- 2. Can you define exactly what your issue is?**
- 3. Do you know where to go?**
- 4. Do you know when to appear to inform officials?**
- 5. Do you know how to prepare for an effective presentation?**

### **How can you participate in the process?**

- ❖ Letter/phone call**
- ❖ Office of Records at City Hall (City Clerk's Office)**
- ❖ Go to the City's Website at [www.ctsfl.us](http://www.ctsfl.us) or e-mail [cityclerk1@ctsfl.us](mailto:cityclerk1@ctsfl.us)**

- ❖ **Any person with a disability requiring reasonable accommodation in order to participate in a meeting should call (727) 938-3711 or fax a written request to (727) 937-8199.**

**Preparing is the key to a good presentation.**

- ❖ **Clearly define what your issue or concern is.**
- ❖ **Talk about it with others.**
- ❖ **Look at the history of what it is you are concerned about.**
- ❖ **Do the research. There are a number of places to go where you can find information to help your cause.**

**Where can you go to get more information?**

- ❖ **Board of City Commissioners or other Advisory Board meeting minutes can be a good source of background information.**
- ❖ **Tarpon Springs Public Library**
- ❖ **Local newspapers frequently cover hot topic issues, and often include background and research that may be helpful.**
- ❖ **Other neighborhood groups can be a resource if they have similar cases.**

**What does a typical meeting room look like?**

- ❖ **Dias – Located in the front of the room where the Mayor and City Commissioners , City Manager, City Attorney, City Clerk, and Police Chief sit during the meeting**
- ❖ **Podium – a stand with a microphone where presenters speak to the Board**
- ❖ **City Clerk – records the minutes of the meeting**
- ❖ **Police Chief – serves as the Sergeant-at-arms for Commission meetings**

**Who makes up the City Commission?**

**The City Commission consists of five members: the Mayor, Vice Mayor, and three Commissioners. All are elected at-large and serve three year terms. It is the responsibility of the City Commission to set policies and make decisions concerning many different aspects of local government. The Commission also adopts the budget for the City.**

**Board members can be reached by calling the Mayor and Commissioners' Office at (727) 938-3711 or by mail at: Office of the Mayor and Commissioners, P.O. Box 5004, Tarpon Springs, Florida, 34688-5004, or by e-mail at: boc@ctsfl.us.**

**When are City Commission meetings held?**

**Regular Session Meetings (Voting Meetings) are held on the first and third Tuesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. in the City Hall Auditorium, 324 E. Pine Street.**

**Work Session Meetings (Discussion Meetings) may be held as the need arises. Check the City Hall Calendar for special meetings.**

**Other Board/Committee Meeting times and location are listed on the City's web site. Changes do sometimes occur due to holidays or other events.**

**What is an agenda?**

**An agenda is a program for the meeting. The agenda for City Commission Meetings is posted on the City's web site on the Friday prior to the Commission Meeting at [www.ctsfl.us](http://www.ctsfl.us) under "News and Updates".**

**The agenda typically consists of these major parts:**

- ❖ **Call to Order:** The Mayor or Chairperson calls the meeting to order.
- ❖ **Invocation**
- ❖ **Pledge of Allegiance**
- ❖ **Public Comment:** This is the portion of the meeting where members of the audience are invited to speak to the Board or Commission about items that are NOT on the agenda. This is informational only. The Board will not vote on an item brought forward during public comment.
- ❖ **Presentations:** These are brief informational presentations that do not involve a vote
- ❖ **Consent Agenda:** These are items that are non-controversial that are voted on as a group.
- ❖ **Ordinances and Resolutions:** These are legislative or quasi-judicial items that are adopted through enactment of a resolution or ordinance. Ordinances require two readings at separate meetings. Some items in this category are quasi-judicial which requires that the Board follow a set standard for testimony. If an item or Board is Quasi-Judicial, this means

**the decision making powers are similar to those of a judge. The City Attorney will explain and run process.**

- ❖ **Miscellaneous:** These are either voting or discussion items that are not included in the other categories
- ❖ **Staff Comments:** Staff may make any comments they have at this time.
- ❖ **Commissioner Comments:** Commissioners may make any miscellaneous comments or requests at this time.
- ❖ **Adjournment.**

#### **What are minutes?**

**Minutes are the official record of action taken at the meeting. Meetings are recorded in their entirety and the recordings are kept on file in the City Clerk's Office for the legislatively required retention period.**

**If a person decides to appeal any decision made by the Board with respect to any matter considered at this meeting or hearing, he will need a record of the proceedings. For this purpose, he may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, including the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based. The City of Tarpon Springs does not furnish verbatim transcripts. Interested parties should make necessary arrangements for the verbatim transcripts in advance.**

**Copies of Audio tapes can be obtained by calling the City Clerks Office at (727) 942-5614.**

#### **Televised Meetings:**

**The Board of Commissioner's meeting can be viewed on the Government Channel on Bright House, WOW and Verizon. Check listings for your cable carrier for channels. Videos are available live on Livestream and archived on both Livestream and You Tube. Check the City's Website for links.**

#### **How to speak before the Commission or Board:**

- ❖ **Advise the city prior to the meeting if any person with a disability requires reasonable accommodation in order to participate in this meeting. Call (727) 938-3711 or fax a written request to (727) 937-8199.**
- ❖ **Prior to the meeting, make arrangements with City staff if you plan to use electronic equipment or need to use a projection screen for your presentation.**
- ❖ **Turn off all cell phones, beepers and other electronic devices.**

- ❖ **Public comments on items not on the agenda take place at the beginning of the agenda. Persons with comments are allowed four minutes to speak. A spokesperson for a group may speak for ten minutes; however, others from this group waive their right to speak. Spokespersons should make the Board aware of this before speaking. At the podium, the speaker signs in and states their name and address for the record. Public comments on agenda items are called for by the Mayor during each agenda item.**
- ❖ **Handouts may be entered into the record and distributed to the Board and City Clerk during the presentation or copies can be given to the City Clerk prior to the meeting for distribution to the Board.**
- ❖ **Persons are not allowed to speak more than once on the same subject unless it is the applicant or agent(s) for the applicant or the Board grants specific permission based upon unusual circumstances.**
- ❖ **Prepare what you are going to say beforehand. You may find that reading your statement into the record is more effective.**
- ❖ **Make your presentation as specific as you can, and emphasize your important points. State facts and examples if possible.**

**Helpful Tips for effective presentations:**

- ... ❖ **Body language – your posture and how your body moves are very important. It is okay to use your hands, but avoid pointing.**
- ... ❖ **Speak clearly and pause at key points. Avoid slang and be aware of the tone of your voice.**
- ... ❖ **Practice before your presentation.**
- ... ❖ **It is good to show passion during your presentation, but be aware of how much emotion you show. Emotions can take over your whole speech and prevent you from making a valid point.**
- ... ❖ **Use statistics or try “storytelling” to gain the attention of the people you are addressing.**
- ... ❖ **Provide real facts to win over your listeners and make your key points.**
- ... ❖ **Offer reasonable solutions or alternatives for the Board to consider.**
- ... ❖ **Prepare an outline of your presentation.**

- ... ❖ **Educate yourself on the process.**
- ... ❖ **Find out the right department or staff person to speak to.**
- ... ❖ **Research City Code, which can be found on the City's web site, to see how the City Code affects your issue.**
- ... ❖ **Start out the conversation by making a positive comment. This sets the tone of the conversation.**
- ... ❖ **Do not attack or be demanding to your audience.**
- ... ❖ **Bring visuals or handouts to make your presentation more real.**
- ... ❖ **Think about what it is you want to accomplish.**
- ... ❖ **Be specific to issues you are concerned about.**
- ... ❖ **Do your homework**
- ... ❖ **Understand the past history of your issue.**
- ... ❖ **Get involved early.**
- ... ❖ **Don't wait until a Board meeting. Communicate with City employees and Board members in advance.**
- ... ❖ **Ask yourself what you want the Board to hear.**
- ... ❖ **Dress appropriately.**
- ... ❖ **Be ready to answer questions after your presentation.**
- ... ❖ **Bring your concerns to the right Board or to the group of people that can best answer them.**
- ... ❖ **Understand the authority of the Board that you are addressing. Boards cannot make decisions based on opinions, only facts.**
- ... ❖ **Identify other partners/stakeholders in your cause**