



City Council
General Government
Meeting

36 Court Street
Springfield, MA 01103
<http://www.springfieldcityhall.com>

Councilor Justin Hurst (Chair)

~Final~

**February 19,
2026**

4:00 PM

City Hall - Room 200

Roll Call

In Person

Justin Hurst
Victor Davila
Gerry Martin
Atty Tom Moore

Zoom

Tracye Whitfield
Lavar Click-Bruce

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Brian Santaniello	City Councilor At Large	Excused	
Gerry Martin	City Councilor — Ward 7	Present	
Maria Perez	City Councilor — Ward 1	Excused	
Malo Brown	City Councilor — Ward 4	Excused	
Zaida Govan	City Councilor — Ward 8	Excused	
Kateri Walsh	City Councilor At Large	Excused	
Justin Hurst	City Councilor At Large	Present	
Victor Davila	City Councilor — Ward 6	Present	
Michael Fenton	City Councilor — Ward 2	Excused	
Jose Delgado	City Councilor At Large	Excused	
Lavar Click-Bruce	City Councilor — Ward 5	Virtual	

Melvin Edwards	City Councilor — Ward 3	Excused	
Tracye Whitfield	City Councilor At Large	Virtual	

Call To Order

4:00 PM Meeting called to order on February 19, 2026, in Hybrid Room 200, 36 Court Street, Springfield, MA 01103.

Public Portion

1. City Council Public Speak Out Pilot

Minutes:

General Government Subcommittee Meeting Summary Minutes

Date: February 19, 2026

Time: 4:05 PM

Present:

Councilor Chair Hurst
 Councilor Jerry Martin
 Councilor Victor Davila
 Council President Tracye Whitfield (remote)
 Councilor Lavar Click-Bruce (remote)
 Attorney Moore

Agenda Item: Proposed 90-Day Pilot Program – Integration of Public Speak-Out into Regular Council Meetings

Councilor Chair Hurst called the meeting to order at 4:05 PM. The sole agenda item was consideration of a 90-day pilot program to move Public Speak-Out into the regular City Council meeting agenda.

Council President Whitfield clarified she had initially misunderstood the agenda topic and deferred to Attorney Moore for explanation of the proposed rule changes.

Attorney Moore explained that, at the President's request, a draft was revised to implement a trial program requiring temporary suspension or amendment of two rules:

- **Rule 3 (Public Speak-Out)** – governs timing, limits comments to affairs of the City of Springfield, and excludes matters pending public hearings.
- **Section 5 (Order of Business)** – would be modified to insert Public Speak-Out into the

meeting agenda sequence.

He stated that after 90 days, the Council could vote to make the change permanent or revert to existing rules. He emphasized the need to balance First Amendment protections and Articles 16 and 19 of the Massachusetts Declaration of Rights with compliance under the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law.

Attorney Moore noted that municipalities vary in approach, citing the Northampton (unrestricted in-meeting comment), the Worcester (limited to agenda items), and the Lowell (no in-meeting public speak-out).

He advised that Springfield's current Rule 3 language is constitutionally reasonable but warned that placing Public Speak-Out inside the regular meeting increases Open Meeting Law risk if Councilors engage in dialogue on non-agenda matters. He recommended maintaining a prohibition on Councilor participation during Public Speak-Out.

Councilor Chair Hurst explained the proposal stemmed from constituent concerns about low Council attendance during Public Speak-Out and inefficiency when few speakers appear before the regular meeting begins.

Council President Whitfield cited Rule 3 language stating Councilors "shall" attend Public Speak-Out and emphasized that "shall" denotes a mandatory requirement. She suggested issuing a memo reinforcing this obligation and expressed concern about potential Open Meeting Law violations.

Councilor Davila confirmed that remote participation qualifies as attendance under current law. Attorney Moore affirmed that remote attendance counts the same as in-person presence. Councilor Davila suggested clarifying this publicly.

Councilor Davila also asked how effectiveness of the 90-day pilot would be measured. Attorney Moore suggested comparing participation data before and during the pilot. Councilor Chair Hurst stated that after 90 days, the full Council would vote to continue or revert.

Councilor Martin questioned whether limiting remarks to "affairs of the City of Springfield" might unintentionally restrict discussion of state or federal matters affecting residents. Attorney Moore agreed to review whether slightly broader language could be drafted while maintaining legal compliance.

Discussion also addressed:

- Speaker limits (referenced as eight speakers at three minutes each within a 30-minute cap).
- Granting the Council President discretion to allocate time if fewer speakers are present.
- Clarifying internal sign-up deadlines for Public Speak-Out.

Amendment:

Councilor Davila moved to amend Section 4 to explicitly prohibit Councilors from engaging in dialogue or asking questions during Public Speak-Out to ensure compliance with the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law.

Second: Councilor Martin

Vote: Unanimous approval (Ayes)

Attorney Moore agreed to:

- Draft the amended order including the non-participation language;
- Research and clarify sign-up deadlines and internal procedures;
- Prepare a memorandum outlining legal considerations, attendance requirements (including remote participation), and proposed revisions.

Motion to Advance:

Councilor Davila moved to forward the amended proposal to the full Springfield City Council upon completion of revisions.

Second: Councilor Martin

Vote: Unanimous approval (Ayes)

The item was advanced to the full Council for further consideration.

[MIN_SIGNATURES]