

Guide to Public Budget Hearings

Speaking in public can be an exciting and rewarding experience. Our First Amendment and participatory form of government encourages residents to directly share their thoughts and opinions with elected officials and government decision makers. Below are a few tips intended to help you prepare to speak before the Miami-Dade Board of County Commissioners and help make it as easy and painless as possible!

How to Speak at a Budget Hearing

To join the meetings in the Commission Chambers and participate as a public speaker, you will need to bring a picture ID and sign-in at the visitor's desk in the lobby. You will also need to fill out a speaker's card which will be provided at a desk in the lobby. Expect many people to attend the budget hearing so please plan to arrive by 4:30 p.m. to sign up as a public speaker.

When: Thursday, September 8th and Tuesday, September 20th

Place: Stephen P. Clark Government Center, 111 N.W. 1st Street, Miami, FL 33128

Time: 5:01 p.m.

Speaking Duration

Members of the public are generally given two (2) minutes each to address the Board of County Commissioners. However, the length of time you are given to speak may be shortened by the Chair of the Board to one (1) min.

Required Statements

Board rules require that you state your name and address. Begin your remarks by stating your name and address. It's also helpful to say which Commission District you live in. If you aren't sure, use the Who is My Commissioner? address search tool, which can be found at <https://www.miamidade.gov/global/government/commission/home.page>.

If you are younger than 18 years old or your address is protected from public disclosure (i.e. if you are a law enforcement officer or under the protection of a court issued restraining order), you do not need to state your address, you only need to state that *"my address is protected disclosure for legal reasons."*

Preparing Your Testimony

State Your Position: Clearly state your position at the beginning of your testimony. Be clear with where you stand. Also ask the Board to support your position.

Sample: *"I (support/oppose) the Mayor's Proposed Budget and the recommended 1% reduction in the millage rate. I urge the Board to (adopt/modify/decline) the Mayor's proposal."*

Explain Your Position: Provide a short explanation of your position. Why is your position important? Personal stories, compelling facts or statistics are powerful.

Sample: *"We are living in a housing crisis. Miami is the least affordable city in the Country. [INSERT PERSONAL STORY HERE] The _____ program is / was a lifeline for my family. I urge you to invest more money in this program."*

Close Your Testimony: Thank the Board for considering your testimony and listening to the voices of our residents; you could also restate your position in closing.