



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** DIS 19-117, **Version:** 1

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Discussion of issues relating to House Bill 2840.

### Summary:

House Bill 2840, which was approved in the last legislative session, took effect on September 1, 2019. The bill amended the Texas Open Meetings Act to provide that “a governmental body shall allow each member of the public who desires to address the body regarding an item on an agenda for an open meeting of the body to address the body regarding the item at the meeting before or during the body’s consideration of the item.”

Attached is a copy of HB 2840 and a whitepaper prepared by TML on the subject.

The City Council has for many years included an agenda item on regular council meetings allowing audience comments, although, prior to the passage of the bill, the public had only the right to observe, rather than speak at, an open meeting of a governmental body. The audience comments section has now been moved to an even earlier part on the regular council agenda to allow comments before the governing body’s consideration of the item. An audience comments section has also been added to council workshop agendas. Additionally, each of the City appointed boards that are subject to the act (CCPD, FCPEMSD, DPCDC, P&Z Commission) now have an audience comment section on its agenda.

The statute allows a governmental body to adopt reasonable rules concerning the public’s right to speak at an open meeting. The rules may include how long the person can address the governmental body on a given item. If the person addressing the governmental body needs a translator, the governmental body is required to allow at least twice the normal amount of time for the non-English speaker to address the body. Staff plans to submit some proposed rules for Council consideration at an upcoming meeting.

### Fiscal/Budgetary Impact:

N/A

Discussion only at this time.