

**BILL NO.** \_\_\_\_\_

**ORDINANCE NO.** \_\_\_\_\_

**AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF SEDALIA AMENDING THE CITY CODE  
REGARDING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT OPEN MEETINGS.**

**WHEREAS**, the City Council desires to make their meetings as informative, efficient, and safe as possible; and

**WHEREAS**, disruptions during City Council meetings make those proceedings less informative, efficient, and safe; and

**WHEREAS**, the Council Chamber and other meeting areas on city property are limited public forums where the public is subject to reasonable restrictions on their conduct and speech; and

**WHEREAS**, the City Council, in recognition of the importance of public participation in municipal government, does hereby expressly designate a free-speech zone to allow the public to meaningfully voice their political opinions; and

**WHEREAS**, the Missouri Sunshine Law authorizes a public body to establish guidelines for recording public meetings.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SEDALIA, MISSOURI AS FOLLOWS:**

**SECTION 1:**

**Section 2-786 Public Participation During Open Meetings**

1. The public is invited to attend and observe all formal, open meetings of the Sedalia city government. All locations on city property utilized for an open meeting are hereby designated as limited public forums where the public is subject to reasonable restrictions on their conduct and speech. Accordingly, it shall be unlawful for any person to disturb or interrupt the progress of any such meeting. Prohibited conduct specifically includes the following:
  - (a) Speaking loudly unless permission to address the body has been granted.
  - (b) Providing public comment without first signing up to do so prior to the beginning of the meeting. The sign-up sheet shall be located in the lobby of the municipal building. Persons wishing to make comment must provide their name, address, telephone number, and the specific subject they wish to comment upon. Comments must be relevant to matters on the agenda unless a formal request to comment upon a non-agenda topic is made in writing and provided to the clerk's office at least two business days prior to the meeting in question. Persons wishing to make comments that rely upon or refer to documents other than those documents provided in the meeting packet must provide a copy of that documentation to the clerk prior to the meeting.

- (c) Refusing to yield the floor (stop speaking and sit down) having been ruled out of order.
  - (d) Making excessive noise such as by booing or using non-silenced device.
  - (e) Threatening to commit violent or unlawful acts.
  - (f) Eating during the meeting.
  - (g) Blocking the views of others by remaining standing or displaying signs.
  - (h) Entering the Council Chamber or meeting area before a meeting without a city employee present or remaining after the meeting has adjourned without a city employee present.
  - (i) Sitting in an area designated for another. Seating sections will be clearly marked for three groups by means of placards and/or queue ropes: officials/staff, press, and the public. Professional media wishing to sit in the press area shall make a formal request for press credentials to the clerk's office stating their parent company. Large cameras, tripods, or other recording equipment that cannot be continually hand-held shall be placed only in a designated area to prevent blocking the views of others.
  - (j) Expressly soliciting votes for a political candidate or campaign.
  - (k) Expressly criticizing a specific city employee by name. Formal complaints shall be submitted in writing to the City Clerk. This prohibition does not bar legitimate political opinions regarding elected officials.
  - (l) Attempting to enter, observe, or record a closed, executive session without permission. This provision shall apply to any room or space on city property where such a closed session may be occurring.
  - (m) Approaching the dais, table, or other seating area occupied by officials or staff without permission from the body or blocking access or egress to such area.
2. The area immediately outside of the Council Chamber is hereby designated as a free-speech zone where the public may express their political views during regular business hours. Persons engaged in such activity shall not block the entry or exit to the Council Chamber, shall not obstruct the closing of the doors, and shall not generate noise of any kind sufficient to disturb the meeting underway inside the Council Chamber.
  3. Any person who violates these provisions shall be asked to comply or leave the premises. If a person refuses to comply, that person shall be ordered to leave and, if necessary, forcibly removed by law enforcement. Such conduct may result in prosecution.
  4. Persons that have been repeatedly ruled out of order or have been found to be repeatedly disruptive during the meeting are subject to being banned from attending meetings for one calendar year. Such a ban shall require majority approval of the City Council.
  5. Persons who have been aggrieved by this policy wishing to file a complaint must do so in writing within two business days of the occurrence in question. A form for this purpose shall be available in the clerk's office. Failure to cooperate with the complaint process and any subsequent inquiry or hearing regarding that complaint shall be deemed a waiver of said complaint. If a contested hearing is held on the substance to the complaint, the complainant shall be subject to cross-examination under oath.

6. The physical act of attending an open meeting shall constitute acknowledgement, acceptance, and agreement of these provisions. The following disclaimer shall be prominently displayed on the entrance door of the Council Chamber **“BY ENTERING THIS CHAMBER, ALL VISITORS ACKNOWLEDGE, ACCEPT, AND AGREE TO FOLLOW THE ORDINANCE ON PUBLIC PARTICIPATION. VIOLATION OF THAT ORDINANCE MAY RESULT IN BEING REMOVED FROM THE CHAMBER.”**

SECTION 2: The provisions of any ordinance or code section in conflict with any provision of this ordinance are hereby repealed to the extent of such conflict.

SECTION 3: This ordinance shall be in full force and effect following final passage and approval.

SECTION 4: The provisions of this ordinance are severable and if any provision hereof is declared invalid, unconstitutional, or unenforceable, such determination shall not affect the validity of the remainder of this ordinance.

Read two times by title, copies of the proposed ordinance having been made available for public inspection prior to the time the bill is under consideration by the Council and passed by the Council of the City of Sedalia, Missouri this 21<sup>st</sup> day of April, 2025.

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Presiding Officer of the Council

Approved by the Mayor of said City this 21<sup>st</sup> day of April, 2025.

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Andrew L. Dawson, Mayor

ATTEST:

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Jason S. Myers  
City Clerk