



Civics 101: How to Engage Council: Audience Questions

1. Emergency Ordinances: Who Determines it as an “emergency”?

- a. Whoever submits the agenda item to the “OnBase” software can submit it as an emergency. However, to pass, an emergency requires 5 affirmative votes instead of the normal 4 and must be consistent with the following criteria found in SMC 01.01.080:
 - i. An emergency ordinance may be adopted only when the ordinance details why it is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health or safety or for the immediate support of City government and its existing public institutions, and includes a section of written detailed findings and facts regarding the following:
 1. The situation is sudden, unexpected, and requires immediate action to prevent or mitigate the threat; and
 2. The normal course of legislative procedures of the City Council cannot timely address the threat without causing or exacerbating harm to the community or government functions.

2. Are there parameters for an emergency ordinance?

- a. See above

3. How does one begin a neighborhood council. My region does not have a NC (lives near Indian Trail Elementary)

- a. Neighborhood councils are independently organized community groups, in which residents govern themselves through a set of bylaws that determine how their council will operate. The City also has bare minimums that neighborhood councils must meet to be considered active. While Balboa/South Indian trail (SIT) was led for many years by a few committed folks, the neighborhood council was out of compliance with their bylaws, and not holding elections or the minimum required 4 meetings per year. The bylaw noncompliance had been observed for an extended period, which prompted the Office of Neighborhood Services staff to reach out to them and give them a window of time to get back within bylaw compliance to continue to remain an actively recognized neighborhood council. Unfortunately, the officers of the neighborhood council were unable to come back to compliance and stepped down from their roles. The neighborhood council went inactive in January. To restart the neighborhood council it would be best to reach out the Office of Neighborhood Services liaison to that area, Gabby Ryan (gryan@spokanecity.org). They typically provide support to folks interested in restarting the NC by





demystifying what that process looks like by providing transition documents, officer onboarding resources, and offering leadership development training to new/incoming officers.

- 4. I've heard multiple times from City Council there are things that public don't understand. Can you provide an example of something that they have a hard time understanding?**
 - a. A lot of the processes behind council are very bureaucratic and confusing for the public and Council Members. It can be difficult to understand the timelines for how ordinances and resolutions move from committee to final action, especially when there are amendments and emergency clauses. That is one of the biggest reasons behind council adopting the new rules and agenda.
- 5. Can the city elaborate more on the county and state relationship?**
 - a. The City strives to have a collaborative relationship with the county and state. Council Members work and meet with county commissioners on joint boards like airport board and STA board. They may also schedule meetings with them about specific issues that affect both city and county. Council also has a close relationship with the state. Council employs two lobbyists, an intergovernmental affairs initiative manager, and has a state legislation board with three Council Members. These bodies all work together during legislative sessions in Olympia to pass legislation that benefits Spokane. Outside legislative sessions, Council Members will meet with state representatives and senators about specific topics.
- 6. Can council have one or two town hall meetings regarding controversial issues that have not been legislated yet?**
 - a. If there is significant support from the council or the public, around a certain issue they would be happy to host a town hall. They have hosted town halls in the past, one issue has been spreading the word to the greater public to ensure a wide variety of community perspectives are shared.
- 7. When are committee meetings? Date/Time? Can one attend virtually?**
 - a. Committee meetings are always broadcast live on City Cable 5 (<https://my.spokanecity.org/citycable5/live/>). Not only can you attend virtually, you can also sign up to testify virtually as well. For the next month committee meetings are on Mondays at 12:00. However, starting July 14th committee meetings are moving to Tuesdays at 11:00.
- 8. When are the pedestrian/traffic safety committee meetings?**
 - a. While there isn't a "pedestrian or traffic safety" specific committee, there is the Transportation Commission. This commission meets on the 3rd Wednesday of every month at 4:00 in council chambers. The Transportation Commission's is organized around "the plans and programs necessary to achieve a safe and equitable





multimodal transportation system,” so it focuses heavily on pedestrian/traffic safety.

9. How many police officers are there? What percentage are African American, Native American, Asian, Caucasian?

- a. These numbers are a little outdated, but as of May 6, 2025 the demographics of SPD officers were 333 officers broke up as: **Gender:** 305 men and 28 women
Race/Ethnicity: 288 White, 20 Hispanic or Latino, 8 Other/Not Indicated, 7 Black, 5 Native American, 2 Multiracial, 1 Asian, 2 Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

10. What happened to the court order for police reform?

- a. In 2016, Spokane County has received over \$4 million in total funding from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation’s Safety and Justice Challenge to safely reduce local jail populations and eliminate racial inequities in the criminal justice system. As for the City of Spokane, Spokane City Council and members of the administration held community forums on public safety reform and in 2023 came up with a joint statement/plan. Here is a link to that joint statement: [Reform Document Updated](#)

11. Why do we not have ranked-choice voting?

- a. Spokane is prevented from ranked choice voting by state law. House Bill 2210 was a bill in the last state legislative session. The bill sought to give local governments the option to implement the ranked choice voting method in local elections. The bill failed to advance to the House floor for a vote, and “died” for the session. A similar bill may be attempted next session starting in January. Until a state law is passed cities are not allowed to implement ranked choice voting, even in local elections.

12. I believe ICE is violating 24-hour sanctuary laws at 411. Cataldo: What can the city do about this and what can I do as a citizen?

- a. The city passed a ban on the use of private property for detention facilities in March. If DHS is violating this ban the first step should be to reach out to city council members and the mayor. The ban was passed as an update to the land use standards in code, so it would be valuable to also include the planning and development department (erapsdc@spokanecity.org).

13. When will there be a study session on the advanced aerospace materials manufacturing center that borders the city that has national and economic policy implications. When will the public get informed about these details.

- a. Right now, there is no plan to have a study session on the advanced aerospace materials manufacturing center. However, if council is interested in learning more about the center they can request a study session at an upcoming date. Study sessions are always open to the public, broadcast live, and recorded and posted on the council Vimeo and YouTube. This potential study session would be a great opportunity for the public to learn more about this.





14. Say I want something (public restrooms) how would I go about getting that?

- a. With any new policy ideas, a good place to start is always reaching out to council, or the Council Member that represents your district. Council Members are usually happy to correspond via email or set up an in-person meeting with you. If you have prior information or research, it is valuable to share that with them. They can then take the next steps of writing ordinances to get the requested changes into code. Council Members are also good at directing requests to the proper channels and departments if your request is better suited for that.

15. Why do we have bike lanes when you don't clear them?

- a. The city does its best to keep bike lanes clear with the limited resources they have. If there are bike lanes with debris, you can submit a service request to Spokane 311. You can submit a request by calling the number 311 on your phone, or on their website (<https://myspokane311.my.site.com/citizen/s/>). For this scenario the streets department has a special bike lane sized plow for this exact situation!

16. What city department manages street repairs?

- a. The streets department is in charge of street repairs! That being said—similar to the above answer—if there are specific areas that need attention it is best to submit a service request to 311.

17. When you have a gym membership you get an itemized list of what your fees pay for. Is there a way to see what exactly my taxes pay for to make sure I'm not missing any programs?

- a. While not exactly the same as an itemized list similar to a gym, the city's annual budget is posted on the city website (<https://my.spokanecity.org/budget/archive/>). This gives you the option to see the budget in brief or full. If there is a specific topic that you are interested in i.e. community development grants, you can see more details about how they're funded there.

