

The Anchorage Assembly follows a specific and intentional approach to public testimony during public hearings and audience participation, grounded in principles of fairness, decorum, and effective governance. While Assembly Members may ask clarifying or fact-finding questions, we avoid engaging in debate or broad questioning of members of the public. This practice is guided by the following considerations:

1. Preserving the Integrity of Public Testimony

Public hearings are designed to provide residents a safe and open forum to express their views. Engaging in debate may discourage participation, particularly from individuals who are uncomfortable with or unprepared for rhetorical exchanges.

2. Ensuring Equal Access and Fairness

Extended interactions with certain testifiers can unintentionally create an imbalance, offering some individuals more time and attention than others. Limiting our questions to brief, clarifying inquiries ensures that all voices are heard equitably.

3. Maintaining Professional Decorum

The Assembly chamber is a forum for structured, respectful civic discourse. Debate during testimony can blur the line between public input and policy deliberation, potentially undermining the decorum expected in formal proceedings.

4. Separating Testimony from Deliberation

The legislative process proceeds in stages: listening, evaluating, and deciding. Public testimony is the listening phase. Deliberation among Assembly Members occurs later and is informed by the full record of public input.

5. Avoiding Perceptions of Bias or Hostility

Engaging in debate or challenging public testimony may give the impression of defensiveness or partisanship. Maintaining a neutral posture during testimony helps to promote public trust and reinforces our role as impartial decision-makers.

This framework safeguards the dignity of all who choose to participate in public hearings and supports the Assembly's commitment to a transparent, respectful, and equitable legislative process.