



DRAFT

TO: Olympia City Council
FROM: Olympia Youth Council
SUBJECT: Youth Recommendations for Making Public Policy More Accessible

At the April 15 Youth Council meeting, Youth Council members discussed how the City shares information about public policy and what would make it easier for youth to understand and engage with. This conversation was requested by the Youth Council because youth care about local issues but feel disconnected from how information is communicated.

Youth want to be involved in public policy, but a lot of City communication feels too complicated, too long, or disconnected from everyday life. When information is easier to understand, relevant, and shared in places youth already use, engagement becomes much more likely.

This memo highlights the main ideas and recommendations that came out of that discussion.

Recommendations

1. Start with the Main Point

- Lead with a simple explanation of what the policy means and why it matters
- Include short summaries before detailed information
- Avoid overly formal language, jargon, and legal terms when possible

2. Make Information Easier to Read

- Use shorter sentences, bullet points, and clear headings
- Break up large blocks of text
- Create simplified or annotated versions of policies
- Offer printable versions for schools, events, or group discussions

3. Share Information Where Youth Already Are

- Use platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and short-form video
- Create a “Policy Simplified” series with quick explanations
- Use visuals, graphics, and short summaries instead of long documents alone
- Maintain one easy-to-find online hub with clear policy updates

4. Make Communication More Relatable

- Use language that feels conversational and approachable
- Clearly identify trusted sources and factual information
- Focus not only on problems, but also on solutions and outcomes
- Increase opportunities for in-person conversations and community engagement

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5. Connect Policies to Real Life

- Communication should clearly answer:
 - Why does this matter?
 - How does this affect me or my community?
- Using real examples and local context makes policies feel more relevant and understandable.

6. Include Clear Ways to Get Involved

- Add a “What You Can Do” section to communications
- Offer simple next steps for participation
- Provide multiple ways to engage, such as learning more, attending events, sharing information, or giving feedback

7. Reduce Barriers to Engagement

- Keep information short, clear, and easy to navigate
- Use layered communication: quick summaries with optional detailed information
- Improve accessibility through:
 - Multiple languages
 - Different formats like video, text, and print

8. Center Youth Voice

- Involve youth in creating and reviewing communication materials
- Use youth perspectives and youth-led messaging
- Regularly ask for feedback from young people about what is working and what is not

Youth engagement improves when communication is clear, relevant, and accessible. Young people want to understand what is happening in their community and how decisions affect them, but information needs to meet them where they are. Making public policy communication more youth-friendly will help strengthen trust, participation, and community involvement.

The Olympia Youth Council looks forward to continuing to work with the City Council and staff to make public policy communication more accessible, relevant, and engaging for youth in our community.