



Department of Planning & Community & Economic Development

Planning Division

Heather Stouder, Director

215 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. Ste 017
P.O. Box 2985
Madison, Wisconsin 53701-2985
Phone: (608) 266-4635
Fax (608) 266-6377
www.cityofmadison.com

Date: April 13, 2021
To: Members of the Plan Commission, Urban Design Commission, Landmarks Commission, Madison Arts Commission, Downtown Coordinating Committee, and Joint Campus Area Committee
From: Heather Stouder, Planning Division Director
Re: Gender-Inclusive Language during Public Meetings

Greetings, Committee and Commission Members-

I hope you're all healthy and enjoying the start of spring. First, I want to thank all of you for your continued service on City committees and commissions over the past year. The pivot to the virtual meeting environment has had many benefits, some drawbacks, and adjustment challenges. We greatly appreciate your leadership and flexibility throughout months of transition, uncertainty, and "settling in."

Late last year, the City adopted Administrative Procedure Memorandum 2-52, titled "[Inclusive Workplace, Transgender, Gender Non-Conforming, and Non-Binary Employees](#)". Staff are working on multiple fronts to ensure gender-inclusive language in the workplace. Meanwhile, we encourage all of you to consider simple ways you can extend gender inclusivity throughout the proceedings of public meetings. Here are two ideas we'd like to share that could create a more gender-inclusive space, whether in virtual or in-person settings:

1. First and most importantly, when verbally addressing applicants (developers, artists, design professionals, property owners, etc.) or members of the public who register their position on agenda items, please refrain from using honorariums (Mr., Ms., etc.), and instead simply refer to registrants by the name they have provided. This avoids the need to make assumptions about gender, and reduces the likelihood of mistakes that could be hurtful or offensive.
2. Second, during questions and deliberation, consider ways to reduce the use of gendered pronouns and honorariums. When referring to one another or to staff, please feel free to instead:
 - simply use first names, or;
 - if a more formal way to recognize folks is preferred, "Commissioner/Chair [last name]"

For more resources on this issue, please see this recently produced [Gender-Inclusive Language Style Guide](#). You and your colleagues may have other ideas to improve gender-inclusiveness as well, and if you do, I hope you'll share those with Planning Division staff.

Finally, we anticipate that this request will be sent by the Mayor's Office to all boards, committees, and commissions in the relatively near future, so you may be seeing it again via that broader distribution. Thank you very much, once again, for your time and energy as members of City of Madison committees and commissions. We appreciate you, and hope you'll all join us in this effort.

Respectfully,

Heather Stouder, AICP
City of Madison Planning Division Director