



REQUEST FOR ACTION

Better Public Meetings (3:30 - 4:00 p.m.)

MEETING DATE:

August 10, 2026

ORIGINATING DEPT:

City Administration

AGENDA SECTION:

Presentation Items

PRESENTER:

**Nick Vlahos and Jenna
Bowman**

Report Narrative:

Mr. Nick Vlahos with Better Public Meetings, an initiative of the National Civic League, will join the Study Session discussion to provide an update and engage in a discussion about the work Better Public Meetings committed to. This includes three deliverables: a general engagement toolkit for elected officials, a toolkit to guide community-focused meetings and support for a Community & City Council Forum.

The proposed Community & City Council Forum would provide an opportunity to put this work into practice. The forum is intended to create a larger, more conversational setting where residents can connect and interact directly with the Mayor and City Council. It would also help establish a shared approach for elected officials to engage with community members in ways that are tangible, meaningful and accessible.

For the City Council's review, the first Community & City Council Forum is proposed for November 30, 2026. Following that session, City teammates could identify two to three potential dates in 2027, targeting fifth Mondays when a Study Session is not otherwise scheduled. Future sessions could be held at different times of the year and structured around topics that are timely and meaningful to community members.

The first Community & City Council Forum would focus on the results of the 2026 Community Survey. The session would provide an opportunity for the Mayor and City Council to hear directly from community members about the findings that resonate with them, areas where they would like additional discussion and topics that could inform future community conversations.

The proposed format could include a brief overview of the Community Survey results from City teammates, followed by facilitated table conversations involving community members and elected officials. A location would be selected to host a larger group of attendees and support an interactive session. The Community & City Council Forum is expected to last 90-120 minutes.

The objectives of the Community & City Council Forum, as proposed by Better Public Meetings, are:

1. Engage the community early
2. Encourage and invite broad representation
3. Inform the community of the community survey
4. Facilitate reflections on the top findings of the community survey
5. Facilitate future possible directions stemming from survey priorities
6. Establish a digital component for public input (before/during/after) the event
7. Evaluate the event
8. Create a feedback loop (possibly including input and actions or steps taken)

City Council feedback is requested on whether to move forward with the proposed November 30 Community & City Council Forum, the proposed format, the Elected Officials Engagement Framework and a toolkit to guide community-focused meetings.

Priorities & Foundational Principles:

Inclusive Decision-Making

Prepared By:

Jenna Bowman

Attachments:

[Presentation - Rochester Better Public Meetings](#)

[Exhibit - Rochester Elected Official Engagement Framework](#)

[Exhibit - Rochester Civic Infrastructure Scan](#)