

Hoboken says it will add interpretations to council agendas

Hoboken to explain items that appear on council agendas

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HOBOKEN - City officials say they'll try to make City Council meeting agendas easier to understand by including "interpretive statements" explaining unclear items and offering the public the full text of proposed legislation at the beginning of meetings.

The promise comes after an increasing number of complaints from residents.

"Without seeing the resolution it's impossible for me to be talking intelligently about it, so let's just stop," said Michael Lenz, a former chief financial officer for the city who frequently attends council meetings.

Agendas have been available at meetings, but not the full texts of the proposed ordinances and resolutions. And the wording of the agendas can be vague or confusing, residents say.

Take, for example, the following item from last week:

An ordinance to amend and supplement chapter 128 of the administrative code, entitled "licenses."

One would need to see the full text to learn it would raise the cost of business licenses from \$50 to \$100.

"I would like them to give a little narrative about what the resolutions are about," said frequent meeting attendee Maurice "Moe" DeGennaro.

The full texts of the ordinances and resolutions are already posted online several days before the meeting, but DeGennaro countered that "there are many of us who haven't adapted ourselves to the computer age."

DeGennaro said he is aware that he can ask the City Clerk's Office to fax him individual resolutions - the office gets about a dozen such requests each week, City Clerk James Farina said - but said he needs the explanation to figure out which items to request.

City Council President Nino Giacchi said adding "interpretive statements" to the agendas is "something that could be accomplished and accommodated."

Farina said he would leave additional copies of resolutions and ordinances on a table in the back of the meeting room for the public.

In addition to making requests by fax, Farina said residents can pick up hard copies from the City Clerk's Office during regular office hours and between 5:30 and 7 p.m. on City Council meeting nights.