

Case 19: What should Gia say in her two-minute comment?

Gia has two minutes to speak to the parks committee about the court lights, but her draft is three pages long.

On your own Read What happened and underline the sentence that says what item 4 proposes. About 5 minutes.



Gia and Mateo sit on a front stoop, each holding pages of notes.

Your role: You're the one holding the timer and listening for the request. **New skill:** Fit a request to the body's remit and time limit.

What happened

It is Tuesday, 5:40 p.m. The parks committee meets at 6. Item 4 on its agenda is a proposal to turn off the park's court lights at 8 p.m. The reason given is complaints about evening noise from nearby residents.

Gia, 21, wants to speak against item 4. It is her first time speaking at a public meeting. Each speaker gets two minutes. On Monday night, Gia wrote a three-page draft. When she reads page one out loud, it takes two minutes and forty seconds.

Mateo, 22, is timing her from a bench. He follows every word, but he cannot tell what she wants the committee to do. The draft also mentions a friend's private situation, and page two is about the bus. Everything Gia says will become part of the public record, along with her name.

Your question: What should Gia keep in her two-minute comment, and what should she cut?

Key terms

On your own Read each key term and its example, then write your first guess in the box. About 6 minutes.

Agenda item An agenda item is one topic listed on a meeting's official schedule of business.

En español: punto del orden del día

In this case: Item 4, "Evening court hours," proposes turning off the court lights at 8:00 p.m. Its action is a committee recommendation to the full council.

Remit A remit is the set of matters that a committee or other body is responsible for and can act on.

En español: competencia

In this case: The parks committee can recommend court hours. It cannot change bus routes, so page two of Gia's draft belongs with a different body.

Public record A public record is information a government keeps that anyone can ask to see, such as meeting comments.

En español: registro público

In this case: Comments and speakers' names become part of the public record. That is why Gia leaves her friend's private situation out of her comment.

Who is involved



Gia

Speaking at a public meeting for the first time

"I timed page one out loud. Two minutes forty. There are three pages."



Mateo

Timing Gia's practice run from a bench

"I followed all of it. I still couldn't tell you what she wants them to do."

Before you look at the evidence, what do you think Gia should say in her two minutes?

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal blue lines, resembling notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Reading passage

Two minutes at the microphone

On your own Read the passage. At each Stop and think box, pause and answer the question in your head or with a partner. About 5 minutes.

Words to know

- **Agenda item:** An agenda item is one topic listed on a meeting's official schedule of business.
- **Remit:** A remit is the set of matters that a committee or other body is responsible for and can act on.
- **Public record:** A public record is information a government keeps that anyone can ask to see, such as meeting comments.
- **Proposal:** A proposal is a change that someone suggests and that has not been approved yet.
- **Decision-maker:** A decision-maker is the person or group with the power to make a particular choice.

The story: Three pages, two minutes

It is Tuesday at 5:40 p.m. The parks committee meets at 6. Item 4 on its agenda is a proposal to turn off the park's court lights at 8 p.m. The reason given is complaints about evening noise from nearby residents.

Gia, 21, wants to speak against item 4. It is her first time speaking at a public meeting. Each speaker gets two minutes. On Monday night, she wrote a three-page draft. When she reads page one out loud, it takes two minutes and forty seconds.

Mateo is timing Gia from a bench. He follows every word, but he cannot tell what she wants the committee to do. So he asks her one question: "If they only remember one sentence, what is it?"

Your role is to hold the timer and listen for the request.

❓ Stop and think. Why can't Mateo tell what Gia wants, even though he followed every word?

What the committee can do

An **agenda item** is one topic listed on a meeting's official schedule of business. Item 4 is only about the court lights and closing time. Gia's draft says, "Please don't close the park." But nobody is closing the park. It is the lights at 8 p.m.

What the committee can do, continued

A **remit** is the set of matters that a committee or other body is responsible for and can act on. Page two of Gia's draft is all about the bus. The bus is a real problem, but the parks committee cannot change bus routes. In Case 10, you learned to take a problem to the office responsible. The bus question belongs somewhere else.

In Case 4, you learned that a **proposal** is a change that someone suggests and that has not been approved yet. Item 4 is a proposal. You also learned that a **decision-maker** is the person or group with the power to make a particular choice. The agenda says the committee makes a recommendation, and the full council decides.

A short comment can do four jobs. It names the agenda item, shares something the speaker saw, says why it matters and ends with a clear request. Gia's version is short. Item 4. What she counted: twenty or thirty people on the courts between 8 and 9. Many of them work late. Her request: keep the lights on until 9 on weekdays this summer.

One more thing comes out. The draft mentions a friend's private situation. A **public record** is information a government keeps that anyone can ask to see, such as meeting comments. Gia's words and her name will be public. Her friend's story is her friend's to share.

 **Stop and think.** Why does the bus question not belong in this comment?

Real students at real meetings

In Philadelphia, students testified at school board meetings about school closures, using the district's own data (Chalkbeat Philadelphia, April 3, 2026). In Newark, a student coalition brought its own research and specific requests to the school board (Chalkbeat Newark, November 26, 2025).

 **Stop and think.** Why does Gia leave her friend's story out?

Sources

Real source | Chalkbeat Philadelphia | April 3, 2026

'Not what democracy is all about': Philly students slam school leaders' approach to school closures

Real source | Chalkbeat Newark | November 26, 2025

How a Newark student coalition is using its own research to press for change in schools

Look at the evidence

On your own Read each document and write what it shows and what it leaves out. About 10 minutes.

Evidence A | Meeting agenda

Item 4 on the parks committee agenda

Item 4. Evening court hours. Proposal to turn off the court lights and close the lighted courts at 8:00 p.m. Background: complaints about evening noise from nearby residents. Action: committee recommendation to the full council.

Look closely: Circle the item number, the proposed time and the action.

What it shows

One question I still have

Evidence B | Comment rules

How to comment at the meeting

Sign up to speak by 5:00 p.m. on the day of the meeting. Each speaker has 2 minutes. Written comments may be submitted before the meeting. Comments and speakers' names become part of the public record.

Look closely: Underline the deadline, the time limit and what becomes public.

What it shows

One question I still have

What is still missing from the evidence?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Key idea: remit

On your own Read the key idea and the code of ethics, then answer the question in the box. About 6 minutes.

A **remit** is the set of matters that a committee or other body is responsible for and can act on. The parks committee can make a recommendation about court hours. It cannot change bus routes. That is why Gia's comment should ask for something the parks committee can do.

An **agenda item** is one topic listed on a meeting's official schedule of business. Each committee, council or board sets its own rules for who can speak, when and for how long. Seattle City Council is one real example. Its public comment page describes speaking in person or by phone and signing up before the meeting. Each speaker gets up to two minutes, and written comments can be sent by email.

A short comment can do four jobs. It names the agenda item, shares something the speaker observed, says why it matters and ends with a clear request. Before adding personal details, check whether comments become public. A **public record** is information a government keeps that anyone can ask to see, such as meeting comments. At Gia's meeting, comments and speakers' names become part of the public record.

Professional standards

Real source | American Society for Public Administration (ASPA)

ASPA Code of Ethics: 3. Promote democratic participation

"Inform the public and encourage active engagement in governance. Be open, transparent and responsive, and respect and assist all persons in their dealings with public organizations."

In plain words: ASPA's code asks people in public service to make it easy for every affected person to take part in decisions.

Question: The instructions allow written comments in advance. How does that help court users who cannot come at 6 p.m.?

Your answer

Written comments help because ____.

Real source | Chalkbeat Philadelphia | April 3, 2026

Students testified at board meetings and used district data, real public comment with a clear destination.

Real source | Chalkbeat Newark | November 26, 2025

Teens brought evidence and specific requests to their school board, the formula this case teaches.

Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Sort the evidence

On your own Follow a comment from the speaker to the final decision and fill in each box. About 6 minutes.

Follow a comment from the speaker to the final decision. Which body hears it, which body decides, and whose concerns reach the room?

Turn off the court lights at 8 p.m.?

Who decides

Full council: takes the final action

Under which rule

Who lives with it

Your way in

Whose perspective is missing?

Whose view is missing from these documents? What would you ask them?

The view that is missing is _____. I would ask _____.

Practice: choose a response

On your own Choose the best opening sentence, explain why and fix the two marked phrases. About 6 minutes.

Gia has two minutes on item 4. Which opening sentence gives the committee the most to work with?

- ☐ A “The park is really important to everyone, and closing it is a terrible idea.”
- ☐ B “Good evening. I’m Gia, and I’m commenting on item 4, the proposal to turn off the court lights at 8 p.m.”
- ☐ C “You guys never listen to young people, so I hope tonight is different.”

Why I chose it

Improve a draft

A student’s first draft

Hi, my name is Gia and I have lived in this neighborhood my whole life. The park is really important to everyone and closing it is a terrible idea. I go there all the time with my friends and it’s one of the only free things to do around here. My friend works late and this is the only time she can play and **1** she’s been going through a lot at home. You guys never listen to young people. **2** Please don’t close the park.

Rewrite each marked phrase so it says only what the evidence supports.

Rewrite phrase 1

Rewrite phrase 2

Grades 6–8

Your task

On your own Read the steps and fill in the planner boxes before you start your draft. About 8 minutes.

Write and practice a 60-second comment for the parks committee about the court hours.

Use: The agenda item summary and comment instructions.

You'll make: 60-second comment (about 130 words)

Time: 45 minutes

Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has rounded corners and a thin black border around the edges.

Your task, continued

- 1 Read item 4 in Evidence A. Write the item number and what it proposes.
- 2 Read the comment rules in Evidence B. Write the time limit.
- 3 Write what Gia saw at the courts and why it matters.
- 4 Write one request the parks committee can act on.
- 5 Put the four parts together in a comment of about 130 words in the Your draft box.
- 6 Read your comment aloud with a timer. Stop at 60 seconds.

Show it your way

Write it: Submit the comment in writing, about 130 words, using the four-box organizer.

Say it: Deliver your 60-second comment to a partner who plays a committee member and must repeat your request back.

Show it: Make a four-box cue card (item, what I saw, why it matters, what I ask) with a small drawing in each box, and speak from it.



Prefer typing? Scan to open the online workspace.

The item

I'm here about item ____.

What I saw

I noticed ____.

Why it matters

What I ask

Your task, continued

My time limit

Notes

Check your work

On your own Answer the Check your work questions, mark your level in each rubric row and write one change you made. About 5 minutes.

Does your first sentence name item 4?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Does your comment share one observation from Gia?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Does it make one clear request?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Does it fit in 60 seconds when you read it aloud?	☐ Yes ☐ No

How your work is scored

Mark one box in each row.

Skill	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Evidence	☐ No facts.	☐ General claim about importance.	☐ One specific observation tied to the item.	☐ Observation plus acknowledgment of another perspective.
Reasoning	☐ Attacks the body.	☐ States a feeling only.	☐ Explains why the change matters.	☐ Weighs the concern and offers a middle path.
Audience & purpose	☐ Wrong body or no request.	☐ Request is vague.	☐ Names the item and a specific request.	☐ Request fits the body's remit and includes a follow-up.
Revision	☐ No change.	☐ Shortens only.	☐ Removes private details and adds a request.	☐ Explains each cut in terms of time, privacy and purpose.

One change I made

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Questions to discuss

On your own Write a short answer to each question, then complete the sentence frames. About 8 minutes.

- 1** The parks committee cannot fix the bus problem. Who should get that question instead?

- 2** What does Gia get from speaking, even if the committee recommends turning off the lights?

- 3** Court users who work late may miss a 6 p.m. meeting. How could their views reach the committee?

My take

I think Gia should ___ because ___.

The evidence that changed my first guess is ___.

One question I still have is ___.

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Talk about this case at home

Case 19: What should Gia say in her two-minute comment?

In this case, Gia gets two minutes at a parks committee meeting to speak about a plan to turn off the court lights. Your student helped cut her three-page draft into a short comment with one clear request.

Questions to talk about

- 1 Who makes decisions about parks and other public spaces in a town or city?
- 2 What makes a short request easy for a listener to remember?
- 3 Why might someone leave a friend's story out of a public comment?

Nobody needs to share personal stories or private information to talk about this case.



See the case online.