

SALT LAKE CITY CORPORATION

OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL

Media Advisory

March 15, 2004

City Council to Hold Public Hearing on Proposed Amendments to Disturbing the Peace Ordinance

The Salt Lake City Council will hold a public hearing Tuesday on proposed amendments to the City's disturbing the peace ordinance.

The hearing will be part of the City Council's regularly scheduled meeting. The meeting will start at 7 p.m. in the City Council Chamber, Room 315 of the City & County Building, 451 South State. As with all City Council public hearings, speakers may address the Council for up to two minutes.

The City Attorney's Office forwarded the proposed amendments to the City Council after Mayor Ross C. Anderson requested an Attorney's Office review of City ordinances regulating the exercise of free speech under the *Constitution's* First Amendment to determine whether the ordinances were up to date constitutionally. In February, Mayor Anderson released a set of guidelines his Administration would follow for free speech events.

The Attorney's Office reviewed eight ordinances and suggested amendments to one, Section 11.12.020 titled *Disturbing the Peace*. The key proposed change would add language to the section to clarify that "conduct as well as or in conjunction with words can constitute 'fighting words.'"

Under the current ordinance, part of the section reads: "A person is guilty of disturbing the peace if such person ... uses words that are intended to cause acts of violence by the person to whom the words are addressed ..."

The proposed amendment would add the following italicized words:

"A person is guilty of disturbing the peace if such person ... "uses words *and/or does or makes any unreasonable act, gesture, or display* that are intended to cause acts of violence *or are inherently likely to cause a violent reaction* by the person to whom the words *or the act, gesture, or display* are addressed *and that under the circumstances, create a clear and present danger of a breach of the peace or imminent threat of violence.*"

For further information, people can contact either Russell Weeks or Cindy Gust-Jenson at the Salt Lake City Council Office. The office's main telephone number is 535-7600.