

From: [Brian Mondy](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul](#); [Contact-Council](#); [CouncilHearing \(CI-StPaul\)](#)
Subject: Dec. 6 Meeting Item 63
Date: Sunday, December 3, 2023 8:59:33 PM

To City Council,

Please accept the following as public comment on [Item 63](#) of the Dec. 6th meeting. This is an issue of both personal and public concern.

Key Points

- Add appropriate average dBA standards to 293.07 to better fit with modern standards and research.
- Clearly adopt rather than redact the standards outlined in Minnesota Rules 7030 in 293.07
- Consider revising code 293 more thoroughly in consultation with public and environmental health experts.

While Item 63 has the commendable and stated goal of simplifying the bureaucratic process for noise variances, the proposed changes also include changes to the general noise code for the city (Amended SPLC Chapter 293). The changes to 293.07 are discouraging in light of growing research on noise and its effects on public health. I would encourage the City Council to adopt stricter and more modern standards to fit with our motto as "The Most Livable City in America." Doing so will also improve equity in the city as the negative effects of noise are much greater in poorer communities and those with a greater representation of people of color.

Though measurements of noise and its effects are complex, the New York Times provided a brief but thoroughly researched introduction to the issue this past summer in two articles "[Noise Could Take Years Off Your Life. Here's How,](#)" and "[Are You Exposed to Too Much Noise? Here's How to Check.](#)"

As is noted in those articles, a more complete understanding of noise in an area is key to mitigating its negative effects on health and well-being. Thus, most modern research and standards include at least the average dBA, the average noise in an area over a period of time. Unfortunately, St. Paul's code 293.07 provides only a minimal picture by looking at the L10 dBA, the noise level exceeded 10% of any hour, or 6 minutes per hour. The limited standard can lead to the misleading conclusion that emitting noise at just below that standard 12 hours per day is within the noise code, which is contradicted by 293.02 that states that the "duration (293.02b)" and "...comparison to the level of ambient noise (293.02f)" must be considered. Adding an average dBA standard relative to zoning would prevent this kind of error.

While not ideal, [Minnesota Rules 7030.0040](#) provides a more complete picture by including standards related to not only the L10, but the L50 dBA, the noise-level exceeded 50% of the time, and clearly explains that these measures are not the sole determining factor to be considered, “However, these standards do not, by themselves, identify the limiting levels of impulsive noise needed for the preservation of public health and welfare.”

Thus, in the absence of a more thorough revision that includes average dBA, I want to encourage St. Paul to explicitly adopt the standards set out in Minnesota Rules 7030.0040—rather than the current changes that redact reference to these standards (293.07).

Having spent considerable time to understand noise research, and St. Paul and Minnesota code, related to my own situation, and having seen regulators struggle to apply the code, I encourage the council to take this as an opportunity to consider and revise their general noise code (Chapter 293) to become a leader in the U.S. related to noise as an issue of public health and well-being. The World Health Organization notes that average noise above 53 dB can have significant health effects. I hope the Council will consider consulting public and environmental health experts in crafting a better code.

Sincerely,

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