In this week's Reader's Viewpoint, a letter was received regarding public participation at our communities' board and council meetings.

We report on a lot of meetings each month, and, often, it's the public comment period that makes for the best "story." It's a chance for residents to comment, complain and, yes, once in a while even pay a compliment to local government.

Just this past week, the public comment period at several meetings yielded: two residents' concerns over possible dangerous emissions they felt were associated with the recent installation of 'smart meters' in Crystal Falls; more dialogue and new details about the Chicaugon Lake use permit issue that were not on the county board's agenda; a possible dispute over a gate on a county-or not-county road; and two compliments—one to Bates Township's new public works employee Ed Benson, and one to the Crystal Falls Township Board on its management of the municipality.

Some municipalities place their public comment at the beginning at the meeting—and several have moved theirs to the bottom of the agenda, with the reason being twofold: residents often speak their piece, then leave the meeting, not waiting to find out if their issue may be addressed that evening and, as in the case of a recent move by Bates to place "guest comments" toward the end of the agenda, the fact that their issues just may be taken up on the agenda, anyway.

Whether it's called "public comment," "guest comment," or, on the Road Commission's agenda "delegations" (why it's called that, no one really knows, it's just been that way forever!), it's your chance to voice your concerns and be heard. So, like the Reader's Viewpoint writer said, 'take advantage of your freedom—attend meetings."

--Marian Volek