

CALHOUN COUNTY PUBLIC PARTICIPATION POLICY ADOPTED
FEBRUARY 23, 2016

As used herein the term “The Board” shall refer to the Board of County Commissioners for Calhoun County Florida as well as any committees/boards or agencies of the Board of County Commissioners which are subject to the Florida Public Records Law.

WHEREAS, the Board encourages public participation in the affairs of local government; and

WHEREAS, the Board wishes to allow orderly consideration of the public’s concerns and comments regarding matters of local interest; and

WHEREAS, Florida Statute §286.0114 directs local governments to formulate a policy for public comments:

IT IS THEREFORE RESOLVED that the following shall serve as Calhoun County Board of County Commissioners’ Public Participation Policy:

APPLICABLE MEETINGS

This policy shall apply to all meetings of the Board. Unless exempted by Florida Statutes, all meetings of the foregoing are subject to the Florida Open Meeting Law commonly referred to as the Sunshine Law. The foregoing notwithstanding, the requirements set forth in this policy do not apply to:

- A. An official act that must be taken to deal with an emergency situation affecting the public health, welfare or safety if compliance with the requirements would cause an unreasonable delay in the ability of the Board or commission to act; or,
- B. An official act involving no more than a ministerial act, including but not limited to approval of minutes and ceremonial proclamations; or,
- C. A meeting that is exempt from the Florida Government in the Sunshine Law; or,
- D. A meeting during which the Board of County Commissioners is acting in a quasi-judicial capacity, as the rights of persons to be heard during quasi-judicial hearings shall be as provided for by applicable law.

PROCEDURE

Items on the Agenda

In order to speak about a matter on the agenda a speaker should fill out a speaker’s request form and submit it to the recording clerk prior to the commencement of the meeting at which the speaker wishes to address the Board.

Unless extended by the Board, all speakers are limited to three minutes and requested to address topics which are ***relevant*** to the Board and County business. It is in the discretion of the Chair to determine the relevancy of the matter brought before the Board. Repetitive comments are also disfavored and the Chair may limit repetitive comments with the consent of the majority of the Board.

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Non-Agenda Items

Members of the public wishing to address the Board and/or have an item added to the agenda should contact the Calhoun County Clerk's office prior to 4:00 p.m. six calendar¹ days prior to the meeting. The Clerk's office shall prepare and distribute the agenda prior to the Board meeting. Each speaker shall be limited to one topic per meeting and allowed three minutes to address the Board unless the time is extended by the Board.

If a matter comes to the Board for a vote and the particular matter is not on the agenda, those wishing to speak may address the Chair for permission to address the matter after there has been a motion and a second.

Group speakers

Should there be a group of speakers all supporting the same position, the Board may limit the number of speakers on the same issue. Groups who support the same position are encouraged to selected a spokesperson and such spokesperson shall be limited to five minutes.

Decorum:

The following provisions are designed to promote the orderly and efficient conduct of public meetings and not to regulate speaker content beyond the limits allowed by law. The Board may, but is not required to, designate a parliamentarian to assist in the orderly conduct of the meeting. The parliamentarian's direction shall be advisory only and not binding on the Board

1. Citizen's remarks should be directed to the presiding officer or the Board as a whole and not to individual Board members. Speakers should not address Board members by name and personal attacks against individual Board members, the Board as a whole, or County staff are prohibited.
2. Speakers commenting on agenda items shall confine their comments solely to the agenda item being discussed. During the public hearing, speakers must limit their remarks to matters related to the business of the County. Unless it is an agenda item, speakers are prohibited from discussing their own pending court cases and filed claims or complaints against the County or County personnel. Similarly, employees are prohibited from discussing any disciplinary matter that affects them individually unless it is an agenda item.
3. Speakers may not use any form of profanity or loud abusive comments.
4. Any action or noise that causes or creates an imminent threat of a disturbance or disruption, including but not limited to, clapping, applauding, heckling, shouting comments from the audience, or verbal outbursts in support or opposition to a speaker or his/her remarks is prohibited. No signs or placards shall be allowed in the Board meeting. Persons exiting the Board meeting shall do so quietly.
5. The Chair may notify and warn speakers that their comments have gone beyond the subject matter for which they had signed up to address, address matters that are not related to the business of the County, constitute personal attacks on individuals or otherwise violate this policy. The Board may, in its discretion, appoint a parliamentarian to maintain order in the proceedings. The parliamentarian's comments are advisory to the Board and not mandatory.

¹ For a typical Tuesday meeting this would make the deadline requests to be on the agenda to fall on Wednesday at 4:00 pm.

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6. The Chair may turn off the microphone or recess the meeting if a speaker persists in addressing irrelevant topics or engaging in personal attacks. The Chair has the authority after one warning to order the removal of the speaker from the meetings.

Following a warning, any person making impertinent or slanderous remarks or engages in boisterous behavior which the Chair or the Board determines constitutes an actual or an imminent threat of a disturbance or disruption shall be barred from further appearance before the Board for the balance of the meeting.

7. Personal cellular telephone conversations while in the room when the Board meeting is being conducted is not permitted. Such conversations are permitted only during meeting breaks or recess. Ringers must be set to silent mode to avoid disruption of proceedings. Individuals, including those on the dais, must exit the chambers to answer incoming cell phone calls.

Adopted this _____ Day of March, 2016 by a vote of _____ to _____.

Chairperson, Marion L. Brown

Attest, Clerk