

Planning Board

Public Comment Policy

The Planning Board is responsible for conducting its meetings in compliance with the North Carolina Open Meetings Law. In order to facilitate that responsibility and conduct its meeting in an efficient and effective manner, the Board must operate in a professional, organized manner. Unregulated public comments may disrupt the flow of the meeting. However, the Board also recognizes the importance of receiving comments from the public. The purpose of the public comment period is to give the public an opportunity to express their views, comments or opinions to the Board in an orderly manner. It is a time for the Board to listen to the public. It is not a time for debate. The following rules have been established to maintain order and decorum during both the meeting and during the public comment period. Furthermore, these rules are designed to ensure fairness to each speaker by establishing rules in advance that will be applied equally to each speaker.

I. Public Comment Period

The public comment period shall be reserved as an item of business on the agenda for each Board meeting. It is the time of the meeting where the public has a right to offer comments. It is the responsibility of the Chair, or in the Chair's absence, the presiding officer, to enforce this policy. However, all comments to the Board during the public comment period shall be subject to the following guidelines:

1. Prior to the start of the public comment period, persons wishing to address the Board will register on a sign-up sheet stationed by the meeting room door. Prior to beginning the public comment period, the Chair will collect the sign-up sheet and recognize speakers in the order that they registered.
2. Each speaker shall be limited to a maximum time of three (3) minutes. Each speaker will only be allowed to speak once during the public comment period. A Board or staff member shall serve as time keeper and will promptly announce when the speaker's time has expired.
3. No time may be yielded or transferred from one speaker to another. In order to avoid repetition and delay, groups of people supporting the same position are encouraged to designate a spokesperson for the group, but they may speak individually.
4. The public comment period is not intended to require the Board to answer any impromptu questions. The Board is not required to take action on an item that is presented during the public comment period. If necessary, the item may be added to the agenda of a future meeting, thereby providing the Board an opportunity to research the item and provide data for future consideration and review.
5. Discussions between speakers and members of the audience will not be permitted during the public comment period.
6. Speakers who have prepared written remarks or other materials are encouraged to leave a copy of such with the Board's Secretary. The Secretary shall make the materials available to all Board members.

7. Speakers shall be courteous in their language and presentation. Profanity or other inappropriate language or gestures will not be tolerated.

8. In order to provide for the maintenance of order and decorum in the conduct of the meeting, the Chair(or presiding officer) may declare “out-of-order” any person who fails to comply with this policy. The Chair shall caution any such person to abide by the provisions of this policy. Refusal to do so shall be grounds for removal of the speaker from the meeting. A person who willfully refuses to leave the meeting upon being directed to do so by the presiding officer, is guilty of a Class 2 misdemeanor.

9. Comments from the public are not strictly limited to the Public Comment Period. The Public Comment Period is the only time when the public has the right to speak. At any other time during the meeting, members of the public may be called upon or allowed to speak, but only after being recognized by the Chair or by action of a majority of the Board.

- Adopted June 1, 2023