

PUBLIC COMMENT POLICY
AGENDA MEETINGS/PUBLIC MEETINGS
ALLEN COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

The Board of Allen County Commissioners (the “Board”) recognizes the value of public comment on government issues and the importance of allowing members of the public to express themselves on government matters of community interest.

The Board affords public participation in accordance with the procedures below. The Board applies these procedures to all speakers and does not discriminate based on the identity of the speaker, the content of the speech or viewpoint of the speaker.

The Board is also committed to conducting its meetings in a productive and efficient manner. To ensure that agenda meetings/public meetings are completed in a reasonable period of time and to allow for fair and adequate opportunity for input to be considered, restrictions are necessary to regulate limited public participation. The Board shall provide a period for public participation at every regular agenda meeting/public meeting of the Board.

The presiding commissioner of the agenda meeting/public meeting shall administer the rules of the Board for its conduct.

The presiding commissioner shall be guided by the following rules:

- A. Anyone having county business to be heard by the Board may participate during the public portion of an agenda meeting/public meeting.
- B. Any member of the general public who wishes to speak before the Board at the end of the meeting shall be required to fill out a Public Comment Request Form and return the form to the Clerk of Board. Forms shall be available on the county website: <https://commissioners.allencountyohio.com/public-comment-policy-request-application/>, in the Commissioner’s office meeting room or with the Clerk. Forms shall be submitted to the Clerk prior to the start of the scheduled meeting.
- C. Participants must be recognized by the presiding commissioner and will be requested to preface their comments by an announcement of their name, group affiliation - if and when appropriate, and subject matter.
- D. Each statement made by a participant shall be limited to three (3) minutes. Participants may submit the remainder of their statement in writing to the Clerk of the Board.
- E. No participant may speak more than once during the agenda meeting/public meeting.
- F. All statements shall be directed to the Board. No person may address or question Board members individually.
- G. The use of visual aids during the public comment section is prohibited. Individuals are permitted to submit hard-copy materials to the Clerk prior to the meeting to

supplement their oral statements or testimony. It is suggested that four (4) copies of any written testimony, materials and/or information be provided prior to the meeting.

- H. Speakers' subject matter shall not contain obscenity, profanity, defamation or slander. Speakers shall not disrupt the order or decorum of the meeting.
- I. Speakers' shall speak from the podium unless there is some exception.
- J. Speakers' shall only give comments; no debating.
- K. The Board will not receive any personnel complaints during this period. This forum is for public comment only and not the appropriate channel for personnel issues/matters.
- L. The portion of the meeting during which the participation of the public is invited shall be limited to thirty (30) minutes unless extended by a vote of the Board. This clause applies to agenda meetings only.
- M. The presiding commissioner may:
 - 1. Prohibit public comments that are frivolous, repetitive and/or harassing;
 - 2. Interrupt, warn or terminate a participant's statement when the statement is too lengthy, abusive, obscene, off-topic or irrelevant. Speakers are expected to refrain from criminal behavior, including but not limited to, riot R.C. §2917.03, disorderly conduct R.C. §2917.11 or disturbing a lawful meeting R.C. §2917.12;
 - 3. Request any individual to leave the meeting when that person does not observe reasonable decorum or is disruptive to the conduct of the meeting;
 - 4. Call for a recess or an adjournment to another time when the lack of public decorum so interferes with the orderly conduct of the meeting as to warrant such action;
 - 5. Waive these rules with the approval of the Board when necessary for the protection of privacy or the administration of the Board's business.
 - 6. The presiding commissioner is charged with preserving the order and decorum of the session pursuant to that authority, the presiding commissioner is vested with the authority to enforce these rules. If the presiding commissioner determines that these rules are not being followed, one warning shall be given. If the rules continue to be violated after one warning, the presiding commissioner may revoke the individual's speaking privileges. Any ruling pursuant to these rules by the presiding commissioner is subject to appeal by another member of the Board by calling for a Point of Order. If another member of the Board seconds the Point of Order, the presiding commissioner's ruling shall be overturned. Appeals pursuant to this rule are final.

