

Policy #51

Policy Governing Comments from the Public at Town Council Meetings

Policy Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide reasonable, workable time limits for speakers at Town Council meetings. The Town Council (“Council”) encourages and welcomes the input of citizens and in order to balance the need and desire for citizen input and meet the need of Council to conduct Town business in an orderly, expeditious manner, the Council is establishing the following policy (“Policy”).

Coverage

This Policy, upon adoption by the Council, shall remain in effect until such time it is altered, modified or rescinded by the Council.

Policy

1. Public Comment Period

- a. North Carolina General Statute’s 160A-81.1, mandates that local government provide at least one period of public comment monthly. The public comment period shall be reserved as an item of business on the agenda for the Council’s regular session, which is currently held on the 2nd Thursday of each month. Council need not provide a comment period if no regular meeting is held during the month. All comments to the Council during the public comment period shall be subject to the following guidelines:
 1. Each speaker shall sign in on the Public Comments Sign-Up Sheet located at the podium located in the Council Chambers.
 2. Speakers shall address the Council from the podium unless the Mayor deems that he or she may not be so required.
 3. Each speaker shall identify themselves by giving their name before speaking.
 4. Time limits for speakers are necessary in order to complete the required business of the Town Council shall be limited to three (3) minutes; however, the Mayor shall have the discretion of extending such time as he deems reasonably appropriate in order to foster and promote the opportunity for citizen speakers to have open and full access to address the Council.
 5. Each speaker will only be allowed to speak once during the public comment period. The Town Manager or his designee shall serve as time keeper and will promptly announce when the speakers time has expired.
 6. In order to avoid repetition and delay, groups of people supporting the same position are encouraged to designate a spokesperson for the group. The Mayor may establish that a maximum of ten (10) citizen speakers shall address the Council with regard to any one subject.
 7. No time may be yielded or transferred from one speaker to another.

8. The public comment period is not intended to require the council and/or any staff to answer any impromptu questions. The council will not take action on an item presented during the public comment session. Upon completion of the public comment session and when appropriate, the council may refer inquires made during the public comment session to the Town Manager. If necessary, the item may be added to the agenda of a future meeting, thereby providing the staff an opportunity to research the item and provide data to the council for consideration and review.
9. Speakers will address comments to the entire council as a whole and not one individual member. Discussions between speakers and members of the audience will not be permitted during the public comment period.
10. Speakers who have prepared written remarks are encouraged to leave a copy of such remarks with the Town Clerk. Speakers who have materials that they want distributed to the council related to the item they plan to discuss during the public comment period, shall provide nine (9) copies of those documents to the Town Clerk prior to the start of the meeting. The Clerk shall distribute the copies to the Council, Attorney, and Town Manager and retain one copy for the record.
11. Speakers shall be courteous in their language and presentation. Profanity or other inappropriate language or gestures will not be tolerated.
12. In order to provide for the maintenance of order and decorum in the conduct of the meeting, the Mayor may declare "out-of-order" any person who fails to comply with this policy. The Mayor 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.

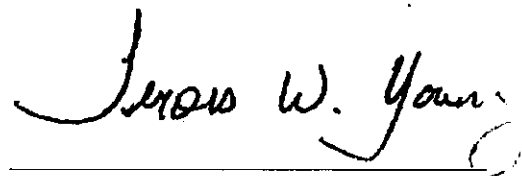
2. Public Hearings and Quasi-Judicial Hearings

- a. Rules 1-12 as stated above shall apply to public hearings and quasi-judicial hearings with the exception of the time limit for speakers which shall be limited to five (5) minutes.

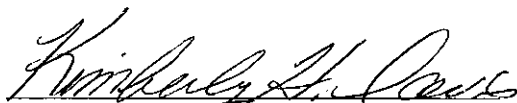
3. Presentations

- a. Rules 1-12 as stated above shall apply to presentations with the exception of the time limit for speakers which shall be limited to ten (10) minutes.

Adopted this the 5th day of February, 2018.



Teross W. Young, Jr., Mayor



Kimberly H. Davis, Town Clerk

