



## **MADISON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS PUBLIC COMMENT AND PUBLIC HEARING COMMENT POLICY**

### **Purpose**

Establish public comment per North Carolina Gen. Stat. §160A-81 and §160A-81.1 which authorizes the Board of Commissioners (“Board”) to adopt rules governing the fair, consistent, and informative conduct of regular public comment periods at regular meetings and public hearings heard by the Board.

The purpose of public comment periods is to give the public an opportunity to express personal views, comments, or opinions to the Board. The following rules have been established to maintain order and decorum during regular public and public hearing comment periods. These rules are designed to ensure fairness to each speaker by establishing rules in advance that will be applied equally to each speaker.

### **Procedure**

An opportunity for public comment will be designated on the agenda at each regular monthly meeting of the Board and a public comment period will be included in each public hearing heard by the Board.

#### **I. Public Comment Period During Regular Monthly Meetings**

- a. Public comment will appear at the beginning of the agenda following the approval of minutes from previous meetings. At the start of each regular monthly meeting, the Chair will review the list of people signed up to speak during the public comment period. Ten (10) speakers will be permitted during the initial public comment item’s section on the agenda. In the event that more than ten (10) speakers have signed up to speak, an additional period of public comment will be added to the agenda and will be placed after the last item on the agenda. If the additional public comment period is required, an additional ten (10) speakers will be permitted to speak during that time.
- b. A standardized public comment form will be provided by a member of the county staff twenty (20) minutes in advance of the meeting’s designated start time.
- c. Persons who desire to address the Board during a regular public comment period shall sign in on the designated speaker sign-up form as provided prior to the start of the meeting. Once the meeting has begun, no further speakers will be accepted.
- d. In the event that a group of persons supporting or opposing the same position(s) wishes to speak, a spokesperson may be requested to be designated.
- e. A selection of delegates from groups of persons supporting or opposing the same positions may be requested to be designated in the event that the number of persons wishing to attend exceeds the capacity of the hall.
- f. Those desiring to speak will be limited to three (3) minutes.

- g. Speakers shall not use or provide any technological presentations, including but not limited to, videos or PowerPoint presentations.
- h. There will be no interaction, i.e. discussion during the comment period. Commissioners, staff, or members of the public will not engage in dialogue with the speaker, giving no comment unless a member of the Board desires to provide information at the end of the speaker's allotted time.
- i. Speakers shall be civil and courteous in the language and presentation. Inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated.
- j. In order to provide for the maintenance of order and decorum in the conduct of the meeting, the Chairman or Vice-Chairman in the Chairman's absence may declare "out-of-order" any person who fails to comply with the policy. Refusal to comply with the provisions of this policy shall be grounds for removal of the speaker from the meeting.

## **II. Public Comment Period During Public Hearings**

- a. A separate standardized public comment form for each public hearing will be provided by a member of the county staff twenty (20) minutes in advance of the meeting's designated start time.
- b. Persons who desire to address the Board during a public hearing public comment period may sign in on the designated speaker sign-up form as provided prior to the start of the meeting.
- c. The public hearing public comment period will appear as the first item after the presentation of the information pertinent to each public hearing.
- d. After the opening of the public hearing, the Chair will review the list of people signed up to speak during the public hearing public comment period and will open the floor for any additional speakers who wish to sign up. Additional persons desiring to speak must state their full name to be entered into the record.
- e. In the event that a group of persons supporting or opposing the same position(s) wishes to speak, a spokesperson may be requested to be designated.
- f. A selection of delegates from groups of persons supporting or opposing the same positions may be requested to be designated in the event that the number of persons wishing to attend exceeds the capacity of the hall.
- g. Those desiring to speak will be limited to three (3) minutes.
- h. Speakers shall not use or provide any technological presentations, including but not limited to, videos or PowerPoint presentations.
- i. There will be no interaction, i.e. discussion during the comment period. Commissioners, staff, or members of the public will not engage in dialogue with the speaker, giving no comment unless a member of the Board desires to provide information at the end of the speaker's allotted time.
- j. Speakers shall be civil and courteous in the language and presentation. Inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated.
- k. In order to provide for the maintenance of order and decorum in the conduct of the meeting, the Chairman or Vice-Chairman in the Chairman's absence may declare "out-of-order" any person who fails to comply with the policy. Refusal to comply with the provisions of this policy shall be grounds for removal of the speaker from the meeting.

Adopted this 13<sup>th</sup> day of December 2022.