

City Commission Policy 108

Public Participation at Meetings

DEPARTMENT: City Treasurer-Clerk

DATE ADOPTED: September 25, 2013

DATE OF LAST REVISION: June 8, 2022

108.01 Authority: City Commission and Section 286.0114, Florida Statutes.

108.02 Purpose: To provide for citizen input on propositions pending before the City Commission, or Advisory Boards or Committees, as defined herein.

108.03 Definitions:

- **Regular Meetings:** Refers to regularly scheduled meetings of the City Commission.
- **Workshop Meetings:** Refers to the City Commission meetings which are conducted for issues requiring a workshop setting.
- **Special Meetings:** Refers to the City Commission meetings which are called or conducted to address time sensitive or emergency business or for any other purpose not addressed by a Regular or Workshop Meeting.
- **Advisory Board or Committee:** Advisory Board means a joint-governmental, legislated, or City-created board, committee, panel, commission, council, agency, bureau, authority, corporation, etc.
- **Representative:** A person shall be deemed to be acting as a representative if he is directly in the employ of or being paid a fee by another or will receive other economic benefit to speak on behalf of another.

108.04 General Statement:

It is the City Commission's policy to provide meaningful opportunities for members of the public to participate in City meetings. Citizen participation in the program and policy development of the City of Tallahassee is recognized as an important element in providing quality public services to the Tallahassee community. It is important to the City's elected and appointed leaders that citizens have meaningful opportunities to participate in meetings.

108.05 Scope and Applicability:

This policy shall govern public participation at all Regular, Workshop, Special Meetings and Advisory Board meetings, as defined herein.

The City Treasurer-Clerk's office shall prepare and maintain a list of Advisory Boards to which this policy applies. The City Treasurer-Clerk may revise or update the list from time to time as needed.

108.06 Citizen Participation relative to Agendaed business

At all Regular meetings, an opportunity shall be provided for members of the public to speak on each agendaed item as each item is taken up. At each workshop, special meetings or advisory board meeting, an opportunity will be provided for members of the public to speak. The time for public speakers will be at the discretion of the Chair of the meeting with the stipulation that input be accepted prior to the vote on any given item.

The Chair of a meeting may require, at a meeting in which a large number of individuals wish to be heard, that a representative of a group or faction on an item speak on behalf of the group or faction rather than each individual speaking; and may designate the length of time the representative may speak.

If the topic a speaker wishes to address is a matter set for public hearing, the speaker must speak during the scheduled public hearing; a speaker is not afforded two opportunities to comment on matters set for public hearing.

Public comment on an agendaed item need only be provided at some time during the decision-making process prior to the point at which the Commission, Committee or Advisory Board takes official action. Accordingly, the Chair may elect not to receive public input at a given meeting on a specific item on the agenda as long as a reasonable opportunity to be heard on that item was or is provided in a prior or subsequent meeting. In all cases, official action shall not occur until after an opportunity to be heard has been provided.

At each opportunity to speak, speaker's comments shall be limited to 3 minutes. Speakers must adhere to a standard of public decorum and must speak only to that which relates to the common good of the City, City policy, or City business, and refrain from personal attacks. Speakers may be interrupted by the Chair if said standard is not met. A civility oath is displayed in the City Commission Chambers and attached hereto.

108.07 Citizen Participation relative to Unagendaed business

As to Regular Meetings of the City Commission, members of the public with an issue of special interest that is not on the meeting agenda who desire to address the City Commission may be heard at the conclusion of the meeting by submitting a Speaker Form to the City Treasurer - Clerk during the meeting. Individual speakers shall adhere to a 3-minute time limit, unless extended by the Chair.

For all other meetings, the Chair shall not be required to take public comment on items not on the published meeting agenda or pending before the body. However, at the discretion of the Chair, such comments may be permitted. In such instances, individual speakers shall adhere to a 3-minute time limit, unless extended by the Chair.

Speakers must adhere to a standard of public decorum and must speak only to that which relates to the common good of the City, City policy, or City business, and refrain from personal attacks. Speakers may be interrupted by the Chair if said standard is not met. A civility oath is displayed in the City Commission Chambers and is available on the City's website.

108.08 Disclosure of Representation

Each speaker must complete a speaker's form prior to making any remarks. All categories on the speaker's slip should be completed for purposes of the official record. Speaker forms will be provided by the City Treasurer-Clerk or Clerk of the meeting, providing his/her name, address, the topic or agenda item on which they wish to speak, and designating a representative, if appropriate. Speaker Forms will be made available to the public prior to the start of each meeting. All speakers who are being compensated directly or indirectly for such representation must identify the individual, firm or business being represented. Prior to the appearance of the speaker, the Clerk of the meeting or other official will state, for the official record, the person(s) the speaker is representing.

Speaker Forms submitted by the public shall be collected and filed in the official record of the proceedings and the content thereof included in the meeting minutes.

Notice of this policy will be included on the speaker's slip form used to register appearances at meetings.

Persons who are compensated to lobby on behalf of entities are required to register annually with the City Treasurer-Clerk and comply with the requirements of Section 2-339 of the General Code of Ordinances.

108.09 Exemptions

The requirements of this policy shall not apply to ministerial items on a meeting agenda, such as the approval of minutes or presentation of ceremonial proclamations. The requirements of this policy shall not apply when the City Commission, Committee, or Advisory Board is acting in a quasi-judicial capacity.

108.10 Staff responsibilities – Advisory Boards.

In compliance with City Commission Policy No. 110, City staff for each Advisory Board governed by this policy shall ensure that the committee's procedures include an opportunity for public participation as required by this policy.

Staff shall place in a conspicuous location a sufficient number of Speaker Forms prior to each meeting.

108.11 Sunset Review:

This policy is subject to sunset review by the City Commission no later than five (5) years from the date of adoption. Subsequent reviews by the City Commission are to occur no later than five (5) years from the date of the prior review. Revisions will become effective immediately upon City Commission approval.

108.12 Effective Date:

This policy shall become effective immediately upon adoption.

108.13 Responsible Agency:

The City Treasurer-Clerk shall be responsible for this policy.

Attachments:

A. Civility Oath

Revisions:

September 25, 2013

November 9, 2016

January 30, 2019

June 8, 2022



PLEDGE OF CIVILITY

WE WILL BE RESPECTFUL OF
ONE ANOTHER
EVEN WHEN WE DISAGREE.

WE WILL DIRECT ALL
COMMENTS
TO THE ISSUES.

WE WILL AVOID PERSONAL
ATTACKS.

“Politeness costs so little.” – ABRAHAM LINCOLN