

Board of Election Public Comment Protocols

Purpose. This Public Comment Protocol is intended to establish a clear, transparent procedure for the Talbot County Board of Elections members, staff members, and members of the public to understand the rules for public engagement at Board Meetings, and to support the meaningful, pertinent, and orderly conduct of business of the Board of Elections pursuant to the Bylaws of the Talbot County Board of Elections.

Rules for the Conduct of Council Meetings

Decorum and Enforcement. The President will preserve order and decorum, among Board members and the public, while in a Meeting. The President may exclude or expel all persons from a meeting at which a disturbance has been created that will not allow the meeting to continue unimpeded. Action to prohibit disruptive behavior must be balanced against each individual's right to petition their government and exercise freedom of speech. However, speakers shall remain courteous and respectful and refrain from disorderly speech or action, name-calling or personal attacks, threatening speech, obscene or indecent remarks, and derogatory comments.

Public Comment

Individuals shall have a reasonable opportunity to be heard at any meeting, provided that the Board is able to accomplish their business in a reasonably effective and efficient manner. To avoid disruptions at meetings, the public shall follow the following guidelines:

1. Individuals must sign in on the sign-in sheet prior to Public Comment.
2. Public Comment is limited to a maximum of 3 minutes per individual. Individuals may not give their time to other people or organizations.
3. Only one public comment per individual will be permitted.
4. The public comment period is a time for the Board to receive information and input from members of the public. The Board will listen to each person speaking as comment is given. In order to ensure that the public comment period of the agenda is orderly and all individuals have a fair opportunity to provide comment on those items important to them.
5. The Board, staff, or Board Attorney may provide answers to public questions raised during the meeting when the answer or concern may be easily addressed. If the issue is complex, to ensure that information being disseminated to the public is accurate, responses may be provided at a subsequent meeting.
6. It is the Board's expectation that citizens will comment in a respectful and courteous manner. Members of the public do not have the right to disrupt meetings. In cases of serious disruption, the Board will adjourn the meeting, or take such other action to resolve the disruption, as appropriate under the circumstances. Speakers shall remain courteous and respectful and refrain from disorderly speech or action, name-calling or personal

attacks, threatening speech, obscene or indecent remarks, and derogatory comments. Speakers who engage in said speech and disrupt or disturb the meeting may be removed from the meeting.

7. Comments may relate to general business of the Board, or a specific Agenda item.
8. Demonstrations, such as clapping, cheering, or booing, are not permitted. They disrupt the meeting and inhibit free speech.
9. Comments must be addressed to the President of the Board.
10. Citizens are encouraged to submit comments in writing to the Board for distribution to all members. Written comments received by the Board are not made a part of the meeting minutes, but will be a part of the meeting packet posted online if timely received. Written comments will not be accepted during the meeting. Written comments must be submitted to (email) by 4:00 pm on the Friday preceding the next Board meeting.
11. During the public comment period at a meeting, citizens are encouraged to provide public comment through oral testimony. The Board will not accept physical handouts in lieu of public comment. Physical handouts should be presented to the President for distribution, but will not be made a part of the meeting minutes.