

**Public Participation Policy**  
**of the Washington County Board of County Commissioners,**  
**Washington County, Florida**  
**Enacted pursuant to Florida Statue 286.0114**

As used herein the term "The Commission" shall refer to the County Commission of Washington County as well as any committees or agencies of the Commission which are subject to the Florida Public Records Law.

WHEREAS, the Commission encourages public participation in the affairs of local government; and

WHEREAS, the Commission wishes to allow orderly consideration of the public's concerns and comments regarding matters of local interest; and

WHEREAS, Florida Statute §286.0114 directs local governments to formulate a policy for public comments:

IT IS THEREFORE RESOLVED that the following shall serve as the Washington County Board of County Commissioners Public Participation Policy:

**APPLICABLE MEETINGS:**

This policy shall apply to all meetings of the Commission. Unless exempted by Florida Statutes, all meetings of the foregoing are subject to the Florida Open Meeting Law commonly referred to as the Sunshine Law. The foregoing notwithstanding, the requirements set forth in this policy do not apply to:

- A. An official act that must be taken to deal with an emergency situation affecting public health, welfare or safety if compliance with the requirements would cause an unreasonable delay in the ability of the Commission to act; or
- B. An official act involving no more than a ministerial act, including but not limited to approval of minutes and ceremonial proclamations; or
- C. A meeting or any portion of a meeting that is exempt from the Florida Government in, the Sunshine Law; or
- D. A meeting during which the Commission is acting in a quasi-judicial capacity, as the rights of persons to be heard during quasi-judicial hearings shall be as provided for by applicable law.

**PROCEDURE:**

Effective October 1, 2013, Florida Statute 286.0114 mandates that "members of the public shall be given a reasonable opportunity to be heard on a proposition before a Board or Commission." The Washington County Board of County Commissioners has expanded this provision to allow

members of the community to speak on a topic which is not currently before the Commission/Agenda. To be heard by the Commission, the following procedures apply:

1. **A Proposition before the Commission/Agenda Item:**

- a. Prior to the time a meeting has been called to order, should an individual or group wish to address an item which is on the agenda for consideration, the individual or group shall obtain, from the Commission Secretary or Clerk, a public participation form and write on the form, their name and the agenda matter which they wish to address. The completed form(s) shall be returned to the Commission Secretary/Clerk, who shall provide the form(s) to the Chairperson.
- b. Should a particular group wish to address an item, they shall nominate a spokesperson to voice their ideas, comments, and concerns.
- c. In the event an individual wishes to speak on an item, and has not signed up in advance, the chairperson has discretion to allow them to speak. However, those who have signed up shall be given priority.
- d. Speakers may only address the Commission one time per agenda item.
- e. Each individual shall have up to three (3) minutes to speak before the Commission.

2. **Non-Agenda Audience/Public Participation:**

- a. Prior to the time a meeting has been called to order, should an individual wish to speak on a topic which is not currently before the Commission/Agenda, they shall obtain, from the Commission Secretary or Clerk, a Non-Agenda Audience/Public Participation form and write on the form, their name and the topic they wish to address. The completed form(s) shall be returned to the Commission Secretary/Clerk, who shall provide the form(s) to the Chairperson.
- b. Each speaker shall have up to three (3) minutes to speak.

3. **Stand-Alone Item:**

- a. If a member of the public wishes for a matter to be placed on the agenda as a stand-alone item, please contact the Commission secretary at least 48 hours prior to publication of the agenda. Publication of the agenda is typically one (1) week prior to the meeting date (subject to specific meeting dates, holidays or other unforeseen circumstances).
- b. Those wishing to be placed on the agenda should provide as much detail and supporting documentation as possible to aid the County Administrator in their decision, and to be provided to the Commission.

- c. Failure to timely request that an item be placed on the agenda may require that the item be placed on the agenda for the next regularly scheduled Commission meeting.
- d. The Board of County Commissioners has delegated the determination of whether a matter should be placed on the agenda to the County Administrator. The County Administrator can seek direction from the Board Chairperson, as needed.
- e. The Board of County Commissioners restricts agenda items to those which are in the public interest and pertain to Washington County Government Business. This can include concerns of policy and procedure, public health concerns, Commission actions, County department actions (no individual employee attacks), or County government programs.
- f. If it is deemed that a matter will not be placed on the agenda as a stand-alone item, the person making the agenda request may speak during the non-agenda audience/public participation part of the agenda.
- g. The above provisions regarding time limits shall not apply to properly requested agenda items.

4. Conduct:

- a. Any public comment before the board shall be directed to the Chairperson of the Commission. The Commission or its members are not required to respond to specific questions but may do so if they so choose. The Chairperson may interrupt or terminate any individual's speaking privilege if the speaker's comments, attire, visual aids, or electronic aids constitute a personal attack; are slanderous, defaming, disruptive, or obscene; violating any law; or otherwise, are in violation of this policy.
- b. Public comments concerning individual employees (other than those hired directly by the Commission (County Administrator/County Attorney) shall not be entertained.
- c. Any comment, pro or con, regarding a county employee who does not report directly to the Commission shall be addressed to the Human Resources Department or the County Administrator.

Adopted this 17<sup>th</sup> day of July, 2025.

  
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CHAIRPERSON