

Walton County Board of Commissioners
Meeting Procedures
November 24, 2015 and December 8, 2015
Amended January 22, 2019 Amended July __, 2021

I. **Conduct of Meetings. Agenda**

Call to order: The Chair shall call the meeting to order. In the absence of the Chair and the Vice-Chair, the Commissioners present shall select a Chair. Upon the arrival of the Chair or the Vice-Chair, the temporary Chair shall relinquish the Chair upon the conclusion of the business immediately before the Commission.

Quorum and Failure to Attain a Quorum: A majority of the whole number of members on the Commission shall constitute a quorum. No ordinance, resolution, or nonprocedural motion shall be adopted by the Commission without the affirmative vote of a majority of the quorum present. Should no quorum attend within thirty (30) minutes after the hour appointed for the meeting of the Commission, the Chair or the Vice Chair, or in their absence, the Administrator or his or her designee, may adjourn the meeting to another hour or day as voted on by those Commissioners present.

Agenda:

1. **Order of Business:** There shall be an Agenda for every meeting of the County Commissioners which shall determine the order of business conducted at the meeting. Administration shall prepare the
Agenda. The County Commission shall not take action upon any matter, proposal, or item of business which is not on the Agenda. The Agenda shall be approved by the Commission at the meeting.
2. **Authority to Place Items on Agenda:** Matters may be placed on the Agenda by any County Commissioner, Administration, the Tourist Development Executive Director or the County Attorney.
3. **Add-ons:** The County Commissioners, Administration, Tourist Development Executive Director, and the County Attorney shall have the authority to add Agenda items when it is essential, necessary, and in the County's best interest to do so.
4. **Consent Agenda; Removal of Items:** A portion of the Agenda shall be designated as a Consent Agenda and all items contained therein may be voted on with one motion. Any Commissioner may withdraw items from the Consent Agenda and such items shall be voted on individually.
5. **Citizen Items:** Any citizen may be placed on the Agenda of a Regular Meeting of the Commission and be heard concerning any matter within the scope of the Commission's jurisdiction. When Administration places a citizen's request

on the Agenda, the Commissioners shall be furnished information prior to the meeting, if available, as to the topic the citizen wishes to discuss.

6. **Agenda Submission Form:** see attached as Exhibit A.

II. Rules of Debate

- A. **Making Motions:** If the Chair wishes to make a motion, he or she may relinquish the Chair to the Vice-Chair. Upon relinquishing the Chair, the Chair or any other Commissioner may move, second and debate a subject only to such limitations of debate as are by these rules imposed upon all Commissioners.
- B. **Getting the Floor, Improper Reference To Be Avoided:** Each Commissioner desiring to speak for any purpose shall address the Chair and, upon recognition, shall confine himself or herself to the question under debate.
- C. **Interruption; Call to Order; Appeal a Ruling of the Chair:** A Commissioner, once recognized, shall not be interrupted when speaking unless it is to call him or her to order or as herein otherwise provided. If a Commissioner, while speaking, is called to order, he or she shall cease speaking until the question of order is determined by the Chair, and if it is in order, he or she shall be permitted to proceed. Any Commissioner may appeal to the Commission from the decision of the Chair upon a question of order, where upon without debate the Chair shall submit to the Commission the question, "Shall the decision of the Chair be sustained?" And the Commission shall decide by a majority vote.
- D. **Privilege of Closing Debate:** Any Commissioner may move to close debate and call for question on any motion being considered. Such motion is not debatable and must receive a second. A majority vote is required to end debate.
- E. **Method of Voting:** The vote upon any ordinance, resolution, motion or other matter may be by voice vote or electronic vote. If a voice vote is used, the Chair or any Commissioner may require a roll call vote to be taken.
- F. **Explanation of Vote:** Once the question is called for a vote, there shall be no discussion by any Commissioner prior to voting and each Commissioner shall vote yes or no. Any Commissioner, upon voting, may give a brief statement to explain his or her vote.
- G. **Tie Votes:** Whenever action cannot be taken because the vote of the Commissioners has resulted in a tie, the status quo shall continue in effect and the proposed ordinance, resolution, or motion that produced the tie vote shall be removed from the Agenda without prejudice to its re-introduction on a de novo basis at a later time; provided that in land use and other quasi-judicial matters when action on a resolution or motion results in a tie vote the resulting vote shall be considered a denial.

- H. **Vote Change:** Any Commissioner who has stepped away from the meeting temporarily when a vote is taken may record his or her vote, or any Commissioner may change his or her vote, before the next item is called for consideration or before a recess or adjournment is called, whichever occurs first, but not thereafter without the unanimous consent of the Commission.
- I. **Reconsideration:** Once action is taken on a proposed ordinance, resolution or motion, neither the ordinance, resolution or motion nor its repeal or rescission may be brought before the Commission again during the six (6) month period following the said action unless a majority of the Commissioners present vote for reconsideration.
- J. **Adjournment:** A motion to adjourn shall always be in order and decided without debate, except that the motion shall contain a time to hear the balance of the Agenda if same has not been completed. The Chair at his discretion may adjourn the meeting.
- K. **Applicability:** If the Board departs from these procedures without objection from a Commissioner, any actions taken by the Board will be binding. If there is any conflict with these procedures and any ordinance, the ordinance will prevail.

III. Public Participation in County Commission Meetings.

The Walton County Board of Commissioners wants to insure that the rights of individuals to participate in public meetings are balanced with maintaining decorum during that meeting and is committed to allowing members of the public an opportunity to offer comments and suggestions for the efficient and effective administration of government. In addition to public hearings, a special time is set aside for the purpose of receiving such comments and suggestions. All comments and suggestions addressed to the Board during the Public Comment period shall be subject to the following procedures:

A. Public Comment on Items that Appear on the Agenda:

1. There shall be an Agenda Item at the beginning of the Agenda for "Public Comments." The Public Comments made during that time shall be limited to the items that are listed on that Board Agenda for that meeting. The first public comment period shall be limited to fifteen (15) minutes unless extended by the Board Chair. The Agenda shall also contain an Agenda Item at the end of the Agenda. During that period of Public Comments, the public shall be allowed to comment on any public business that they choose regardless of whether their comments pertain to an item on the Agenda or not. The second public comment period will be limited to a total of fifteen (15) minutes. An extension of the period may be granted by the Board Chair.

2. During the consideration of an item on the agenda, a representative of a group or organization may address the Commission in lieu of all or a number of the members of the group or organization addressing the Commission. The representative of the group or organization shall identify the group or organization that they are speaking on behalf of and shall be allowed additional time to speak. The representative shall ask for the additional time and the Chairperson will grant the time. In no event shall the additional time exceed 10 minutes unless extended by a vote of the Commission. If the group or organization's representative speaks to this issue, then and in that event, no other member organization's governing body may address the board on that item on the Agenda.
3. Finally, the public may comment on a scheduled agenda items will be before the matter is voted upon by the Board and after there is a Motion and Second on the item being considered.
4. Except as otherwise noted in Paragraph 2, persons who wish to speak will have three (3) minutes to make his/her remarks.
5. Speakers will be acknowledged by the Board Chairperson in an orderly manner. Speakers will address the Board from the podium at the front of the room and begin their remarks by stating their name and spelling their last name (if requested by the Chair) and whether they reside in a city, and if so, which city, or whether they reside in the unincorporated area.
6. Back-up materials, if any, should be submitted to the Clerk of Courts for distribution to the Commission and to be entered into the public record.
7. Public comment is not intended to require the Board to answer any impromptu questions. Speakers will address all comments to the Board Chair and not one individual commissioner. Discussions between speakers and members of the audience will not be allowed. No person, other than a member of the Commission, and the person having the floor, may be permitted to enter into any discussion, either directly or through a member of the Commission, without permission of the Chairman. After receiving permission from the Chair, a member of the Commission may ask the speaker a question
8. Speakers will be courteous in their language and presentation. Speakers must be respectful and courteous in their remarks and must refrain from personal attacks, slander, and the use of profanity. Any person who becomes disorderly or who fails to confine remarks to the identified subject or business at hand shall be cautioned by

the Chairman and given the opportunity to conclude remarks on the subject in a decorous manner and within the designated time limit. Any person failing to comply as cautioned may be barred from making any additional comments during the meeting by the Chairman, unless permission to continue or again address the Commission is granted by the majority of the Commission members present.

9. If the Chairman or the Commission declares an individual out of order, he or she may be requested to relinquish the podium. If the person does not do so, he or she may be subject to removal from the Commission Chambers or other meeting room.
10. Only one speaker will be acknowledged at a time. The public comment period may be extended at the discretion of the Board Chair.
11. Speakers who have prepared written remarks or supporting documents are encouraged to summarize those remarks during the discussion period and to leave a copy of such remarks and documents with the Clerk to the Board. Any documentation that is furnished to the Board must also be furnished to the Clerk for insertion into the record.
12. Speakers shall not discuss any of the following:
 - Matters which concern the candidacy of any person seeking public office, including the candidacy of the person addressing the Board;
 - Matters which are closed session matters, including but not limited to matters within the attorney-client privilege including anticipated or pending litigation, pending bid protest, personnel, protected property acquisition procedures, matters involving quasi-judicial hearing or due process considerations, or matters which are made confidential by law as determined by the Chairman or the County Attorney; and ☐ Matters which are the subject of public hearings.
13. For those matters in which citizen's input is heard by the Commission, the Chair shall close the citizen's input portion of the meeting upon the conclusion of the last speaker's comments. No additional citizen's input shall be allowed, except in specific response to questions by members of the Commission or if an extension of time for public comment is approved by the Chair.
14. For public safety purposes, no signs or placards mounted on sticks, posts, poles or similar structures shall be allowed in County Commission meeting rooms. Other signs, placards, banners, shall not disrupt meetings or interfere with others' visual rights.

15. Any applause shall be held until the end of the Public Comment period. Clapping, applauding, heckling or verbal outbursts in support or opposition to a speaker or his or her remarks shall be discouraged. Persons exiting the Commission Chamber shall do so quietly.

B. Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items: (All decorum rules shall apply as listed above with the following additions or differences.)

1. Individuals shall be entitled to be placed on the official agenda of a regular meeting of the Commission and be heard concerning any matter within the scope of the Commission's jurisdiction. This section shall be entitled "Public Comments or Requests."
2. In order to be added to the agenda, an individual must submit the agenda submission form to the Walton County Office of Administration by the agenda submission deadline of the meeting at which they wish to appear. The deadline for submission of agenda items is the Monday, 8 days prior to the regularly scheduled monthly meetings. A copy of the form can be found on the County's website.
3. Back-up materials, if any, must be included with the original Delegation Request. Late distribution of such material or distribution to other individuals or groups without furnishing advance copies to the Board of County Commissioners may result in deferral of the speaking opportunity to a future meeting, in order to allow the Board an opportunity to review the material before the discussion.
4. Information presented shall be done so as information only. If a request for vote or action is made, the item, at the discretion of the board, may be placed on next regularly scheduled board meeting agenda for discussion and potential action by the Board.
5. Terms of submission: Any submission for publication by Walton County shall not contain any abusive, profane, inflammatory, obscene or racist language in accordance with FCC regulations; nor may submissions solicit, promote, or discuss any commercial product or activity not currently under consideration by the Commission.
6. If a person wishes to address the Board during this period of time and has not presubmitted their request to do so, then and in that event, the person may ask the chair to be recognized and may speak to the Board on any item not on the Agenda. However, such comments shall be limited to same decorum outlined above.

C. Public Comment at Workshops or Scheduled Public Hearings: (All decorum rules shall apply as listed above with the following additions or differences.)

1. Time shall be allotted for public comments and registration to speak will not be necessary unless required by the Board Chairperson.
2. Those who wish to speak must be acknowledged by the Board Chairperson.
3. Speakers will address the Board from the podium at the front of the room and begin their remarks by stating their name and whether they reside in a city, and if so, which city, or whether they reside in the unincorporated area. If requested by the Chairman, the person may be required to state whether he/she speaks for a group of persons or a third party. If the individual represents an organization, whether the view expressed by the person represents an established policy or position approved by the organization and whether the person is being compensated by the organization.
4. The remarks of each speaker shall be limited to no more than three (3) minutes.
5. Individuals shall not be recognized to speak on the same topic on more than two occasions.

D. Additional Information

1. No person shall be allowed more than fifteen (15) cumulative minutes to speak during one Commission meeting, unless she or he is a party (or a party's agent or representative) to a quasi-judicial agenda item. An extension of the fifteen (15) minute limit may be granted by a vote of the Commission.
2. Information sheets outlining the process for the public's participation in Board meetings will be posted on the website and will be available upon request.
3. No Action shall be taken on items brought up during the Public Comment until the requested action is placed on the regular meeting agenda.
4. Nothing contained herein shall be construed to restrict the authority of the Board of County Commissioners.

5. Virtual Public Comment: The public or land use applicants may elect to provide comment through virtual meeting software as may be established by the County Administrator from time to time (“Virtual Participants”).
 - a. Virtual Participants will need to pre-register by completing a Public Comment Form by going to the County’s website at Virtual Public Comment Instructions. A separate pre-registration will be required for each meeting. Pre-registration must be completed at least twenty four (24) hours before the start time for the scheduled meeting. Registration must include the agenda item(s) during which the participant wishes to speak. Virtual participants will be limited to five (5) items. Virtual participants will not be allowed to speak on any items for which they have not pre-registered with the exception of the open public comment item at the end of the meeting.
 - b. Virtual Participants must log-in to the meeting at least fifteen minutes prior to the scheduled meeting start on the day of the scheduled Board of County Commissioners meeting to comment on items on the Consent and Regular Agenda of the meeting. Virtual Participants providing comments for items listed on the Public Hearing section of the Board of County Commissioners Agenda, or for any item listed on the Planning Commission agenda, must log-in to the meeting at least fifteen minutes before the scheduled start of the Public Hearing portion of the Agenda on the day of the scheduled meeting.
 - c. All Virtual Participants will utilize the link provided at the time of pre-registration. All participants must participate using an active video connection. Audio only connections will not be recognized.
 - d. During the meeting, Virtual Participants will be notified by the Chairman, the Clerk, or a member of County staff, when they will be permitted to speak.
 - e. Virtual Participants are subject the same time limits as in-person participants, as set forth in Section 3 above. Land use applicants with items on the regular Public Hearing agenda shall ensure that at least one person with authority to make binding commitments relating to the application is physically present at the meeting. Because any person is allowed to attend the meeting in person, Virtual Participants, when registering to participate virtually, assume the risk of any technology issues that may prevent their comments from being heard properly. If technology issues arise with Virtual Participants, the Board may elect to either disregard their comments, or continue the item until the technology issues have been resolved, or until the Virtual Participant(s) can attend the meeting in person.