



GUIDELINES FOR PUBLIC COMMENT AT TOWN COUNCIL MEETINGS

The Town of Georgetown encourages the public to participate in the process of open government and offers the following guidelines with respect to public comment for the purpose of conducting orderly meetings. These guidelines shall typically be adhered to but are not meant to be inflexible or mandatory rules on Council.

TIME CONSIDERATIONS

- The Public Comment Period will be placed on all agendas for public meetings, and will typically be the next to the last item of business, just prior to Adjournment. The Town reserves the right to change the order of items on Agendas. (Compliant with Del.C. Title 29, § 10004(a)(2)).
- The time limit for each individual (whether speaking in person or by Zoom/remote participation) to speak is 3 minutes.
- Where the total time for public comment has exceeded 40 minutes, Council reserves the right, by majority vote, to end the public comment period, but will allow remaining speakers the option to participate in public comment at the next regularly scheduled Council meeting and/or submit their comments in writing after the meeting.
- Speakers may not give their time to other people.

GUIDELINES

- All speakers are required to address their remarks to the chair.
- The purpose of public comment is to allow the speaker's remarks to be heard. It is not meant to be an opportunity to question or debate members of Council and substantive questioning on issues will not be responded to.
- All speakers are required to keep to the 3-minute time limit. This ensures consistency and fairness.
- The chair should thank each speaker, whether positive or negative.
- In general, there will not be responses to public comment. However, the chair may provide brief factual information, if appropriate.
- We recommend using surnames to address speakers. If you use first names for some speakers, use them for all.
- Councilmembers should typically refrain from speaking during this portion of the meeting.
- Town Staff will be ready to note input or questions from the public and to provide responses, or arrange for one-on-one follow up with a speaker, where appropriate, at a later date. Town Staff will not be called upon to, and shall not, give public answers on the spot.

BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS (Council and Public)

- Model courtesy and respect and encourage members of the public to do the same.
- The public has the right to make critical and harsh remarks.
- Members of the public do not have the right to disrupt the meeting.
- The chair may caution or limit demonstrations (booing, hissing, and clapping). These can be chilling to discourse.
- Disruptive members of the public will be given three warnings to cease from the disruptive behavior before being asked to leave the meeting.
- Any person engaging in threatening speech or conduct will be required to leave the meeting immediately.

SUBMITTED WRITTEN PUBLIC COMMENTS

- Includes comments submitted in written form via US Mail, electronic delivery, and hand delivered correspondence.
- The person submitting the comments must identify himself or herself by name and address, including zip code. Anonymous comments will not be read.
- Comments must be received by the Town Manager's office at least four hours in advance of the meeting.
- Only comments which request to be read into the record shall be read aloud at the meeting. The chair may summarize other written correspondence at his/her discretion.
- The time limit of 3 minutes shall also apply for submitted letters (read aloud).
- All comments must address a topic related to Town governance.

SUGGESTED INTRODUCTION TO PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Now is the time to hear from our public. We welcome your comments which are very important to us. Note that all comments are limited to 3 minutes.

As a reminder, please go to the podium to comment. Please give us your name, address, and address your remarks to the chair.

Note that we will not be entering into dialogue at this time. The purpose of this agenda item is for YOU, the public, to inform US, the council, about your views.