

WASHBURN COUNTY POLICY FOR PUBLIC DECORUM AND PUBLIC COMMENTS AT OPEN MEETINGS

The primary purpose of open meetings is to afford elected officials the opportunity to conduct County business. The purpose of the following rules of decorum is to assure an orderly framework within which the business at hand can be conducted by setting basic ground rules for public comments at meetings, the distribution of information, and prohibiting inappropriate behavior. Members of the public desiring to make a public comment will be afforded the opportunity to do so. These rules are meant to supplement existing Washburn County Board Rules, Part 1, Rule 16, No. 18, public comments at meetings.

Public Comment Sign In Sheet: Any person (“Speaker”) desiring to speak during the period of Public Comments on the agenda must sign in on the a Public Comment Sign In Sheet, which is provided at the meeting next to the meeting agenda, by writing the Speaker’s full name and township, county, and state of residence. The meeting’s secretary shall deliver the Public Comment Sign In Sheet to the meeting’s Chair prior to the commencement the period of Public Comments on the agenda. Only Speakers that have signed in on the Public Comment Sign In Sheet will be invited by the Chair of the meeting to make public comment.

Presentation of Public Comment: Speakers must state their name, township, county, and state of residence before making their public comment.

Limited Public Forum: Public comment is intended to give members of the public an opportunity to address items on the meeting’s agenda, public concerns, items for future agendas, as well as to comment on other topics relating to County services. Orderly procedures require that each Speaker proceeds without interruption by others, and there will be no questions or arguments between Speakers and the members of the public and the members of the Board or committee. The members of the Board or committee will not offer response to public comments during the period for Public Comment. Public comment is not allowed during other portions of the meeting’s agenda.

Time Limit: Each Speaker will be provided a fair and equal opportunity to be heard. A Speaker's public comment will be limited to three (3) minutes, unless a Board Supervisor or committee member sponsors such Speaker for an additional time period determined by the Chair of the meeting. When a Speaker chooses to be represented by an agent, said agent shall identify whom they are speaking for and shall be authorized to speak for the amount of time the Speaker or Speakers would otherwise be allowed to speak. When a Speaker or Speakers choose to be represented by an agent, said Speaker or Speakers shall stand during the agent’s public comment so the Board or committee can see all of the Speakers that are endorsing the agent’s public comment.

Civility and Decorum: Board supervisors, committee members, and members of the public are expected to conduct themselves with civility and to afford each other a measure of dignity and respect.

- Shouting, personal insults, and attacks or any conduct that disrupts the flow of the meeting’s will not be allowed.

- Speakers are to direct their public comment to the Board or committee in its entirety, cannot single out Board or committee members for response to the public comment, nor can a Speaker address specific issues with other members of the public who may be present at the meeting.
- Members of the public shall not bring signs or placards to the meeting and shall not applaud or engage in any actions that would impede another Speaker's right to make public comments at the meeting.
- Public comments that are personal attacks, threatening, obscene, or insulting will not be allowed.
- Public comments that are properly subject to a closed session, such as personal attacks or job performance relating to County personnel, will not be allowed and the meeting's chair will refer the Speaker to the County's Human Resources Director.
- Speakers shall not make public comments of only personal application to the Speaker, including, but not limited to, claims, citations, appeals, or lawsuits.
- Offending Speakers or those who are disruptive will be ruled out of order by the meeting's Chair and shall immediately stop speaking as directed by the meeting's Chair. Such individuals may be required to leave the meeting, including forcible removal by law enforcement, at the discretion of the meeting's Chair.