

WILKES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS PUBLIC COMMENT POLICY

At the October 6, 2015 Wilkes County Board of Commissioners meeting the Board established the following policy for public comment before the Board:

1. A public comment period shall be placed on the agenda for the second regular monthly meeting of the Board of Commissioners each month. If the second regular monthly meeting is canceled, the public comment period shall be placed on the agenda for the first regular meeting of the month. The public comment period shall be listed on the agenda as "Public Comments," "Public Concerns," or other similar heading.

2. Each person desiring to speak during the public comment period for that month shall sign up to do so with the Clerk to the Board of Commissioners (hereinafter the "Clerk") no later than 5:00 p.m. the day before the meeting. If the day before the meeting is on a weekend or a legal holiday, each person desiring to speak shall sign up no later than 5:00 p.m. on the last business day before the meeting. The Clerk shall maintain a sign-up sheet for this purpose. Persons signing up to speak shall be required to list their name, address, and the topic on which he or she will speak.

3. Each speaker shall be allotted up to five (5) minutes to speak which shall be strictly observed unless otherwise extended at the discretion of the Chairman of the Board of Commissioners (hereinafter the "Chairman"). No time may be yielded to a speaker by another speaker.

4. At the request of the Chairman, groups of persons supporting or opposing the same positions may be asked to designate a spokesperson to speak. A designated spokesperson may be allotted up to 10 minutes. Additional time may be allowed at the discretion of the Chairman.

5. Speakers shall be recognized by the Chairman before speaking and normally will be called on to speak in the order in which they signed up, but the Chairman reserves the right to call on speakers in a different order in his discretion.

6. If a speaker has a written statement or other materials which he or she wishes to present to the Board of Commissioners, a copy should be provided in advance of the meeting to the Clerk. Audio, video, multi-media, and other electronic presentations shall not be permitted unless approved in advance by the Chairman.

7. Speakers, once recognized by the Chairman, shall present their comments from the table in front of the Board of Commissioners, or they may speak from their seats. Each speaker shall begin by stating his or her name and address. Speakers shall not approach the Board of Commissioners without requesting and receiving permission from the Chairman.

8. Speakers wishing to speak on any topic that is the subject of a public hearing on the same agenda shall do so in the public hearing and not during the public comment period.

9. Speakers shall at all times maintain proper decorum and shall make their comments in a courteous and civil manner. Personal attacks will not be allowed. No speaker will be allowed to make vulgar, obscene, or defamatory remarks.

10. Speakers are encouraged to discuss issues germane to Wilkes County, but the Board of Commissioners shall not restrict the subject matter of any comment based on content except as may be provided by law or as may be covered by the following:

- (a) No speaker shall be allowed to discuss any matter which is the subject of a pending or potential judicial or administrative action in which the County or any of its departments or employees is involved or to which the County or any of its departments or employees is or may be a party.
- (b) No speaker shall be allowed to discuss any matter which is made confidential by law.
- (c) No speaker shall be allowed to discuss any matter regarding the candidacy of any person seeking public office, including the candidacy of the person addressing the Board of Commissioners.

11. Commissioners should refrain from engaging in a dialogue with speakers except to the extent necessary to clarify the speaker's position. The public comment period is not intended to require the Commissioners, the Commissioners' staff, or any County employee to answer any impromptu question. The Chairman may acknowledge to the speaker that the comments have been received as a matter of information. If the Chairman deems that the public comments require further investigation and/or action, the Chairman may refer the matter to the appropriate Commissioner, member of the Commissioners' staff, or County department for review and recommendation. Commissioners should not have any discussion among themselves on a speaker's topic or comments during the public comment period.

12. The Chairman shall preside over the public comment period and shall be authorized to enforce the provisions of this Public Comment Policy. The Chairman at any time may call on the assistance of the County Attorney in interpreting or enforcing said provisions. Any member of the Board of Commissioners may object to the comments or actions of a speaker as being in violation of the provisions of this Public Comment Policy and may request that the Chairman enforce said provisions, but all final decisions concerning enforcement shall be reserved to the Chairman.