

## **PUBLIC COMMENT POLICY**

The Chairman asked me to provide this information as a policy for the Board's consideration:

Florida Statute 286.0114(2) provides that members of the public shall be given reasonable opportunity to be heard on a proposition before the Franklin County Board of County Commissioners. The opportunity to be heard need not occur at the same meeting at which the board take official action on the proposition if the opportunity occurs at a meeting that is during the decision-making process and is within a reasonable proximity in time before the meeting at which the board take official action.

To facilitate public comment, the Agenda is to be completed by Thursday afternoon preceding the next meeting of the Board of County Commissioners, including all reports of the department heads, county coordinator and county attorney.

A notation should be added to the agenda and to the website stating that the public is invited to comment on the items on the agenda during the public comment portion of the agenda. This agenda will then be posted to the website the Friday before the next board meeting.

Florida Statute 286.0114(2), authorized Franklin County to designate a specific period of time for public comment: It is the policy of Franklin County that public comment on the agenda items is designated to occur immediately following the opening of the meeting. However, public comment during public hearings will occur when the public hearing is taken up on the agenda and not during public comment.

Members of the public who desire to be heard during public comment shall, at the time that the Chairman calls for public comment during the public comment portion of the agenda, raise their hand to indicate that they wish to be heard. Members of the public will be recognized by the Chairman and asked to come forward to the podium and speak. Alternatively, (or additionally) the Board could require that person who wish to speak during public comment complete a speaker's card and deliver it to the Clerk of Court prior to the meeting at either 33 Market Street, Suite 203, Apalachicola, Florida or 34 Forbes Street, Apalachicola, Florida.

Pursuant to 286.0114(4)(a), Franklin County is authorized to provide guidelines regarding the amount of time an individual has to address the board: Franklin County adopts the following guidelines for public comment:

- a. Individuals: the board adopts a guideline that public comment for individuals should be kept to no more than three minutes. The member of the public will approach the podium after being recognized by the Chairman and state their name. Members of the public may have someone else speak on their behalf if they wish.
- b. Representatives: Pursuant of 286.0114(4)(a)(b), the board adopts as a guideline that the public comment of representatives of groups or factions should be kept to no more than five minutes rather than all members of such groups or factions at meetings in which large number of individuals wish to be heard. The designated representative of the group or faction will step to the podium after being recognized by the Chairman and state their name and the name of the group or faction on whose behalf they are speaking.

- c. The board is not required to respond to speakers during public comment period or during public hearings.

No action will be taken on non-agenda matters brought up during public comment. Rather, if the board desires to take action on a matter brought up during public comment, then the board will vote to have that matter placed on the agenda of a future meeting of the board.

Action by the board will be taken on agenda items at the time shown on the agenda, or as soon thereafter as possible.

Emergency action on matters not on the agenda that require board action which cannot be deferred: first, the board will amend the agenda to add the matter, then, call for public comment, followed by a discussion of the board and staff before taking action.

During public hearings, such as the adoption of an ordinance, the public shall be allowed to comment prior to a vote being taken on the proposed ordinance.

Matters Not On the Agenda: Substantial or complex matters not on the agenda that are brought up by the Commissioners during a meeting shall be placed on a future agenda for action by the board, if a majority vote of the board approves. Alternatively, as to routine and simple matters, if the Board feels that action should be taken during the meeting at which such non-agenda matter is brought up, then the Board may amend the agenda by motion, discuss the matter and call for public comment prior to taking action.

During public hearings, public comment shall be subject to the above rules for individuals and representatives.