



RESOLUTION TITLE: TO ESTABLISH RULES OF DECORUM GOVERNING PUBLIC COMMENT PERIODS DURING REGULAR MEETINGS OF THE GASTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

WHEREAS, North Carolina General Statute § 153A-52.1 requires local boards of commissioners to provide at least one period for public comment per month at a regular meeting of the board; and,

WHEREAS, North Carolina General Statute § 153A-52.1 authorizes local boards of commissioners to adopt reasonable rules that govern the conduct of their public comment periods at their regular meetings, including rules to maintain order and decorum; and,

WHEREAS, Gaston County recognizes that rules of decorum commonly help local boards across our State and nation to structure and maintain an orderly, civilized, and respectful public forum in which elected officials have an opportunity to hear from their constituents; and,

WHEREAS, Gaston County desires to maintain decorum throughout its citizen recognition public comment periods.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Gaston County Board of Commissioners:

The following Rules of Decorum shall be followed throughout all public comment periods and administered in a content-neutral manner to ensure that this part of the Agenda is conducted in a civil and orderly manner:

1. Each speaker is allocated three (3) minutes to speak. No public comment period shall extend beyond one (1) hour, unless the Chairman or presiding officer elects in his or her discretion to extend the overall time period.
2. A speaker may not share or relinquish any remaining time they have not used to another speaker.
3. Speakers are only allowed to speak one (1) time during the public comment period.
4. A person may speak only if they have signed up to speak in accordance with the Board's procedures. Speaker substitutions at the meeting are not allowed.
5. Speakers shall provide their name and address at the start of their comments.
6. Speakers shall refrain from personal attacks and/or threats directed towards County staff, elected Board members, or members of the public.

DO NOT TYPE BELOW THIS LINE

I, Donna S. Buff, Clerk to the County Commission, do hereby certify that the above is a true and correct copy of action taken by the Board of Commissioners as follows:

7. Speakers shall be civil and courteous in their language and presentation. Insults, profanity, use of vulgar language or gestures, or other inappropriate behavior are not allowed.
8. Speakers shall address the Chairman with any and all public comments. Comments, questions, jeering, or other interruptions from the audience are not allowed. Speakers shall likewise not address or respond to members of the audience.
9. Speakers should not expect Board members to comment on or respond to their comments directly during the meeting. The Chairman, or presiding officer may, however, request the County Manager's office to follow up with a speaker after the meeting or provide additional information to the Board at a later date.
10. The Chairman, or presiding officer, has the authority to enforce the Rules of Decorum. Failure to obey these Rules may result in the forfeiture of the remaining speaking time and possible criminal charges. Individuals who engage in egregious or repeated violations may be asked to leave the meeting. Speakers and members of the audience should note the following legal provision from North Carolina General Statute § 143-318.17:

“A person who willfully interrupts, disturbs, or disrupts an official meeting and who, upon being directed to leave the meeting by the presiding officer, willfully refuses to leave the meeting is guilty of a Class 2 misdemeanor.”