

## **Public Participation in Meetings of the Grady County Board of Commissioners**

All meetings of the Grady County Board of Commissioners ("the Board") are open to the public. The Board believes that public involvement is an essential element in building a successful and transparent Government. The Board welcomes visitors and will hear any interested citizen and/or employee of the County pursuant to the guidelines outlined below.

### **Procedures of Public Comment:**

Speakers will be given up to three (3) minutes to speak. To allow the meeting to proceed in a timely fashion, public comment will not exceed a total of thirty (30) minutes by all speakers. The thirty minute time limit and/or three minute maximum per speaker may be extended by the presiding officer. The time limit restrictions do not apply if the speaker has properly pre-arranged to be a part of the meeting's formal agenda.

Members of the public who wish to speak at official meetings and work sessions of the Board are expected to adhere to the rules of decorum as outlined below.

1. The speaker must begin his/her remarks by stating his/her name, address and organization represented, if any.
2. The speaker must address all remarks to the Chairman, and not to any individuals.
3. The speaker's comments must be pertinent to county business.
4. The speaker must refrain from personal comments, political comments, and must avoid repetition and argument.
5. All speakers must conduct themselves in a respectful manner and refrain from vulgar language and disrespectful comments.
6. Remarks shall end when the speaker's allotted time has expired.
7. Questions from the Board may be asked for clarification; however, no person from the floor shall be permitted to enter into any discussion either directly or through a member of the Board.
8. No person shall be allowed to disrupt or interfere with procedures.
9. Any person who violates any of these rules may be removed from the meeting at the request of the presiding officer.
10. After the Board begins discussing agenda items, only the Chairman, the commissioners and persons requested by the Board will be allowed to speak.

## **Board Decorum**

During all meetings members of the Board are expected to behave with dignity and conduct themselves in a professional and respectful manner. All remarks should be directly to the chair and not to individual commissioners, staff, or citizens in attendance. A commissioner should not speak at a meeting until recognized by the chair and all remarks should be addressed to the motion or agenda item being discussed. Personal remarks are inappropriate and should be ruled out of order by the presiding officer.

## **Citizen Decorum**

Citizens should be held to the same standards of decorum that apply to the commissioners. That is, inappropriate or offensive remarks and personal attacks should not be allowed. Citizens do not have the right to interrupt or heckle commissioners, staff or other citizens who have been granted an opportunity to address the commissioners. Inappropriate behavior will be ruled out of order. If a citizen disrupts the meeting, the presiding officer may recess the meeting or have a deputy or other law enforcement officer remove the disruptive person from the meeting to restore order. A person who knowingly commits any act that prevents or disrupts a lawful meeting may be found guilty of a misdemeanor in accordance with Georgia Law. Mere courtesy prohibits whispering or conversation during the conduct of the meeting.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Portions of this policy were excerpted from the Handbook for Georgia County Commissioners, pages 547-554.