



## **Public Comment Policy**

### **Overview**

In 2005, the North Carolina General Assembly, through the passage of NCGS 160A-81.1, required that each municipality in North Carolina provide a period for public comment at least once per month at a regular meeting of the board of commissioners. The General Assembly gave board of commissioners the authority to adopt rules governing the conduct of the public comment period. The Town of Davidson recognizes the importance of receiving comments from the public. The purpose of the public comment period is to give the public an opportunity to express their views, comments or opinions to the board of commissioners. It is a time for the board of commissioners to listen to the public. The following rules have been established to maintain order and decorum during the public comment period. Furthermore, these rules are designed to ensure fairness to each speaker by establishing rules in advance that will be applied equally to each speaker.

### **Public Comment Period**

The public comment period shall be reserved as an item of business on the agenda for the board of commissioners' regular meeting, which is currently held on the fourth Tuesday of each month. All comments to the board of commissioners during the public comment period shall be subject to the following guidelines:

1. Prior to the start of the public comment period, persons wishing to address the board of commissioners will register on a sign-up sheet stationed by the meeting room door. Prior to beginning the public comment period, the Mayor will collect the sign-up sheet and recognize speakers in the order that they registered. Speakers will address the board of commissioners from the podium and special accommodations will be made for persons with a disability with appropriate advanced notice to the Town Clerk. Speakers will be asked to identify themselves for the record.
2. Speakers may speak on any topic unless it is a topic for which a public hearing is being held on the same regular meeting agenda. Topics must be germane to the Town of Davidson.
3. Each speaker shall be limited to a maximum time of three (3) minutes. Each speaker will only be allowed to speak once during the public comment period. The Town Clerk shall serve as time keeper and the Mayor will promptly announce when the speaker's time has expired.

4. No time may be yielded or transferred from one speaker to another. Each speaker will be concise and avoid repetition. In order to avoid repetition and delay, groups of people supporting the same position are encouraged to designate a spokesperson for the group.
5. The public comment period is not intended to require the board of commissioners and/or any staff to answer any impromptu questions. Board members may ask a speaker to clarify information in order to better understand the speaker's comments. The board of commissioners will not take action on an item presented during the public comment period. Upon completion of the public comment period and when appropriate, the board of commissioners may summarize the comments heard from citizens and the board of commissioners may refer inquiries made during the public comment period to the Town Manager to address as appropriate. If necessary, the item may be added to the agenda of a future meeting, thereby providing the staff an opportunity to research the item and provide data to the board of commissioners for consideration and review.
6. Speakers will address comments to the entire board of commissioners as a whole and not one individual member. Discussions between speakers and members of the audience will not be permitted during the public comment period.
7. Speakers who have prepared written remarks are encouraged to leave a copy of such remarks with the Town Clerk. Speakers who have materials that they want distributed to the board related to the item they plan to discuss during the public comment period, shall provide nine (9) copies of those documents to the Town Clerk prior to the start of the meeting. The Clerk shall distribute the copies to the Davidson Mayor and Board of commissioners, Attorney, and Town Manager and retain one copy for the record.
8. Speakers shall be civil and courteous in their language and presentation. Insults, personal attacks, accusations, profanity, vulgar language, inappropriate gestures, or other inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated.
9. In order to provide for the maintenance of order and decorum in the conduct of the meeting, the Mayor may declare "out-of-order" any person who fails to comply with this policy. The Mayor shall caution any such person to abide by the provisions of this policy. Refusal to do so shall be grounds for removal of the speaker from the meeting.