



Town of Youngsville

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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 Boards of Commissioners the authority to adopt rules governing the conduct of the public comment period. The Town of Youngsville 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, and 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 the second Thursday of each month. All comments to the Board of Commissioners during the public comment period shall be subject to the following guidelines:

- 1) **Sign up:** Persons wishing to address the Board of Commissioners will need to register. Registration can be done online at www.youngsvillenc.gov/comment by email at customerservice@youngsvillenc.gov, by phone at 919-925-3401, or in person at Town Hall by noon on the day of any regularly scheduled Board Meeting. Speakers will be called in the order in which they registered. Any late registrations or unregistered speakers may be called last, if time permits.
- 2) **Presentation:** Speakers will address the Board of Commissioners from the lectern near the front of the room, unless physically unable, and begin their remarks by stating their name and address. Speakers may speak on any topic that is under the purview of the Board of Commissioners 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 Youngsville.
- 3) **Time Allowance:**
 - a. **Public Comment Period:** Speakers during the monthly public comment period shall be limited to three (3) minutes each. No one may speak more than once during any one public comment period. The Mayor, or Mayor Pro-Tempore, may designate Town Staff

or another Board Member as the time keeper for enforcement of this policy. 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. If a spokesperson is designated for the group, additional time may, at the discretion of the Mayor, be allotted to such a representative speaker, but not more than ten (10) minutes in total.

- b. **Public Hearings:** Speakers during a Public Hearing shall be limited to three (3) minutes each on the topic for which the hearing is designated. No one may speak more than once during a Public Hearing. The Mayor, or Mayor Pro-Tempore, may designate Town Staff or another Board Member as the time keeper for enforcement of this policy. 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. If a spokesperson is designated for the group, additional time may, at the discretion of the Board, be allotted to such a representative speaker, but not more than ten (10) minutes in total.
 - c. **Deferral of Comments for Public Hearing:** If a speaker wishes to address a topic that is scheduled for a public hearing at a later point in the meeting agenda, the speaker will be asked to defer their comment from the public comment period to the public hearing.
- 4) **Visual Aids or Exhibits:** If a speaker desires to present exhibits, or use any video, computer, or other visual aid of any kind, arrangements for such must be made in advance with the Town Clerk. No additional time will be allotted for setting up such videos and exhibits. Speakers who have materials 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 those copies to the Mayor and Board of Commissioners, Town Manager, Town Attorney, and retain one copy for preservation as a public record. Speakers who have prepared written remarks are encouraged to leave a copy of such remarks with the Town Clerk. Document submissions will not be reproduced in the meeting minutes but may be obtained from the Town Clerk as public records. Signage cannot exceed 2' x 1.5' in size and shall not contain defamatory, profane, obscene, or threatening language, graphics, symbols, or other depictions. Signs should be located so as not to block anyone's ability to see the proceedings.
- 5) **Speaker Etiquette:** All comments shall be addressed to the Board as a whole. Discussion of any kind between a speaker and a member of the audience will not be allowed. Speakers are asked to be civil and courteous in their language and presentation. Defamatory, obscene, profane, or threatening language will not be tolerated. In order to provide for the maintenance of order and decorum in the conduct of the meeting, the Mayor may declare any person who fails to comply with this policy or is otherwise disrupting the orderly discussion of public business "out-of-order". 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.
- 6) **Board Response:** Because the purpose of the comment period is for the Board to listen to the public, members of the Board will not respond to any questions or comments made by any speaker, as a general rule, except if necessary to direct the speaker to a particular staff member for follow-up or response. It is in the discretion of the Mayor and the Board whether and when to take any action on issues brought up in the public comment period.

- 7) **Audience Behavior:** Rowdy, disruptive, or threatening behavior by members of the audience during or in response to a speaker's comments during the public comment period will not be permitted.
- 8) **Publications:** Copies of this Policy shall be available at the front desk to Town Hall, the Town Hall Board Room, the Town's website, or by email upon request.