

TOWN OF BLUFFTON

RULES AND PROTOCOLS FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

In accordance with Section 2-46 of the Town Code, the Town Council for the Town of Bluffton, South Carolina, hereby adopts and imposes the following “*Rules and Protocols for Public Comment*” at any meeting of the Town Council for the Town of Bluffton:

1. The public is welcome at all Town Council meetings and are encouraged to attend and participate when permitted. To ensure that Town Council business shall be orderly and efficiently conducted, public comment may be provided or eliminated at the discretion of the Town Council.

2. For meetings at which public comment is permitted, all persons wishing to be heard during the public comment period shall sign-in with the Clerk prior to the start of the meeting. Persons may not sign up on behalf of others.

3. During public comment, each speaker is limited to a total of three (3) minutes per meeting, regardless of whether the person is speaking on their own behalf or as an agent for others. Meeting attendees may not donate, transfer, yield, or give all or any portion of their speaking time to another person.

4. One (1) hour shall be allotted for the entire public comment period. If the public comment period expires before all persons who have signed up get to speak, those names will be carried over to the next public comment period at the next meeting of the Town Council; provided, however, the Presiding Officer may decide to extend the public comment period in his/her discretion.

5. All public comments are to be directed to the Town Council as a whole and not to any member thereof. All speakers shall be mindful and respectful of those participating in or present at the meeting. Speakers shall be expected to be civil in their language and shall refrain from comment or behavior that involves disorderly speech or action, name-calling, personal attacks, threats, obscene or indecent remarks, and/or disruptive actions.

6. All speakers shall confine their comments to issues under the jurisdiction of the Town Council. Speakers shall not use the public comment period to promote or advertise awards, businesses, services, goods, or candidates for public office.

7. All speakers are required to address Town Council from the lectern with the microphone. All speakers shall begin their remarks by providing their name and address.

8. Any speaker that violates these *Rules and Protocols for Public Comment* may be ruled “Out of Order” by the Presiding Officer. Any person whose comments have been ruled “Out of Order” shall immediately cease and desist from further improper comments. The refusal of an individual to desist from further improper comments may subject the individual to removal from the meeting and/or a citation under Section 2-49 of the Town Code.

The Presiding Officer has discretion in enforcing these guidelines to best ensure the orderly and civil conduct of Town Council meetings. These *Rules and Protocols for Public Comment* shall apply to any designated “Public Comment” period as set forth on any agenda of a meeting of the Town Council. These *Rules and Protocols for Public Comment* shall also apply to public participation on any individual item on a Town Council meeting agenda for which public comment is permitted by Council or required by law, including statutorily-mandated public hearings. These *Rules and Protocols for Public Comment* shall not apply to invited speakers or Town personnel in the performance of their duties.