

Amendment To Town Council Rules Pertaining to Public Comments

To see if the Randolph Town Council will amend Town Council Rule Section 27, pertaining to public comments, as follows:

SECTION 27: PUBLIC COMMENTS/DISCUSSIONS AND PUBLIC HEARINGS

The purpose of this Section is to provide rules of public participation at Town Council Meetings that allow for the Council to conduct the business of the Town in an orderly and efficient manner, while protecting the vital tradition of commentary and feedback by the public.

The Open Meeting Law grants the public the right to attend any meeting of a public body except an executive session. An individual in attendance may not address the public body without the permission of the Chair. Ordinarily, public comment and participation will be permitted only:

1. If “Public Comments/Discussion” is on the agenda, during that portion of the agenda; or
2. During the public comments portion of any public hearing.

During “Public Comments/Discussion”, the public may comment on any topic. During the public comments portion of a public hearing, the public may comment only on the topic of that public hearing. The Council may change the order of items on an agenda during a meeting to promote the efficient business of the Council.

Any person, upon entering a Council meeting or hearing for the purpose of participating, viewing, listening or testifying, grants permission to the Town Council to record and televise or otherwise publish their presence and testimony.

Unless otherwise required by law, during both the Public Comments/Discussion portion of a meeting and ~~or~~ during the public comments portion of any public hearing, each person requesting to make a public comment/discussion or to speak at a public hearing may be recognized by the President, and shall state his/her name and address for the record. Public comment at meetings and at public hearings will be limited to three (3) minutes for each individual speaking. No speaker may yield to another speaker without the permission of the Chair.

The Chair may, in the Chair's discretion and upon request, allow a group representative more time to speak in order to avoid repetitive comments from multiple speakers and aid in the efficient conduct of the meeting.

Any speaker who reads from a document or displays an exhibit to the Council must leave a copy with the Council Clerk to be filed with the minutes of the meeting.

All remarks and questions shall be addressed to the Council as a whole through the President and not to any member thereof. No person other than members of the Council and the person having the floor shall enter into discussion either directly or through a member of the Council without permission of the presiding officer.

Public Comments/Discussion:

The Chair will determine the duration of the Public Comment/Discussion period of the agenda. The duration of the Public Comment/Discussion period will ordinarily not exceed fifteen (15) minutes.

No **Councilor** shall speak during **Public Comments/Discussion** without being recognized by the President and no Councilor shall make **Public Comments/Discussion** during this portion of the meeting ~~or hearing~~.

Participants in the Public Comments/Discussion portion of a meeting ~~or in the public comment portion of a public hearing~~ shall not use Public Comments/Discussion or the public hearing:

1. To promote or oppose any candidate running for office.
2. For political purposes relating to an election.
3. To advertise for private commercial purposes or private monetary gain.
4. ~~To make personal attacks on~~ engage in ~~any resident, Town Council Member~~ illegal conduct.
5. ~~To use threatening language or to engage in the use of fighting words. Threats of violence, or other elected or appointed Town official, speech likely to provoke a violent reaction, are prohibited and the Chair may issue a warning or order the dismissal of the speaker.~~

Conduct of the Meeting:

Anyone making out of order comments or acting in an unruly manner shall be subject to removal from the meeting at the call of the President.

No signs, placards or banners of any kind shall be displayed in the Council Chamber by any member of the public at any time during a meeting ~~or hearing~~.

No demonstration of approval or disapproval from members of the public will be permitted (including, but not limited to cheering, clapping, booing, etc.) during any

portion of a meeting ~~or hearing~~ unless specifically invited by the Council President, and if such demonstrations are made, the gallery or public seating area may be cleared upon the instruction of the Council President.

Nothing in this Section shall prevent the Town Council from inviting individuals to speak to the Council on a particular topic of interest to the Council.

So long as it is permitted under the Open Meeting Law and other applicable law, the Council President may decide, on a meeting to meeting basis, whether Public Comments/Discussion will be permitted only virtually, only in person, or both. The agenda for each meeting that contains a Public Comments/Discussion agenda item shall indicate how Public Comments/Discussion shall be made by the public at that meeting.

Public comments may also be provided to the Council by providing them in writing to the Council Clerk, by hand, by mail or by email.

Any member of the public seeking a reasonable accommodation to assist in gaining access to a meeting should contact the Town Clerk or the Town Council Clerk at least 24 business hours in advance of the meeting.