

Sec. 2-61. Public participation.

- (1) *Public Participation on Agenda Items.* In accordance with this section, Paulding County residents shall be afforded an opportunity to address the board of commissioners on work or regular session agenda items. In the order of business, public participation on agenda items shall occur immediately after reports from committees and departments. Public participation on agenda items shall be conducted as follows:
 - a. The speaker must be a Paulding County resident or an owner of real property located within Paulding County;
 - b. The speaker may address any consent agenda, new business, or old business item which is on the current meeting agenda;
 - c. The speaker must register on the public participation sign-in sheet maintained by the Marshal on duty at the meeting. The sign-in sheet shall be open for registration beginning ten minutes prior to the advertised meeting time and remain open until the meeting is called to order. The speaker shall register their name, address, and the agenda topic about which they will speak;
 - d. The speaker must limit their comments to their selected agenda topic;
 - e. Each speaker will be allotted five minutes to speak. No speaker may yield any of their allotted time to a different speaker.

- (2) *Public Participation on Non-agenda Items.* In accordance with this section, Paulding County residents shall be afforded an opportunity to address the board of commissioners on items which are not a part of the current meeting agenda. In the order of business, public participation on non-agenda items shall be the final meeting agenda item. Public participation on non-agenda items shall be conducted as follows:
 - a. The speaker must be a Paulding County resident or an owner of real property located within Paulding County;
 - b. The speaker must submit their name and the specific topic of their comments to the chairman through the county clerk by the close of business (5:00 p.m.) on the Friday afternoon preceding the board of commissioners' next scheduled meeting;

- c. Each speaker must limit their comments to their designated topic;
 - d. Each speaker will be allotted five minutes to speak. No speaker may yield any of their allotted time to a different speaker.
- (3) Each speaker is limited to one speaking opportunity during each meeting day.
- (4) No person may use the public participation portions of a meeting to advocate for or against the nomination, appointment, or election of any candidate for any elective office.
- (5) *Ineligible Speakers.* The following classes of individuals are ineligible to participate as a speaker:
- a. Individuals, including members of their campaign committees, who have filed a declaration of intention to accept campaign contributions, from the date of filing until the date that the election results for the office sought are certified.
 - b. Individuals, including their attorneys, agents, or assigns, who are parties to litigation involving Paulding County and/or its elected officials, agents or employees, if such litigation is currently pending in either state or federal court or who have filed a pending ante litem notice with Paulding County.
 - c. Individuals who are former employees of Paulding County, including their attorneys, agents, or assigns, until the passage of 90 days following the date of termination, cessation, or resignation of their employment.
- (6) *Decorum of members of the public.* Members of the public shall not make inappropriate or offensive comments at a board meeting and are expected to comply with the rules of decorum that are established for commissioners. Individuals who violate any rules of the board may be ruled out of order by the chair or on a point of order by a commissioner. A majority vote of the board will rule on the point of order. An individual who violates the rules of decorum may be removed from the meeting at the direction of the chair.
- (7) *Public hearings.* The board of commissioners may schedule public hearings for the purpose of soliciting public comment on any subject of interest to the board. Hearings may be held immediately prior to, during or following a meeting of the board or at such other places and times as the board may determine. No official action shall be taken at any such public hearing except when scheduled during the course of a regular or called board meeting.