

PUBLIC CONDUCT AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION POLICY

Athens Township Board of Trustees, Athens County, Ohio

Ohio Revised Code §§121.22, 504.09 505.09 2917.11, 2917.12

WHEREAS, the Athens Township Board of Trustees (“the Board”) welcomes and encourages public and media participation at any regular, special, or emergency meeting of the Board or any public hearing; and

WHEREAS, in order to efficiently conduct the business of the Township, and to otherwise maintain an orderly proceeding, the Board recognizes that certain standards of conduct are required from those in attendance; and

WHEREAS, the Board recognizes that from time to time, members of the public may seek to address specific issues or bring certain issues to the Board for consideration, to speak either as proponents or opponents during scheduled public hearings, to speak in favor of or against a matter listed on the agenda for consideration by the Board, or may otherwise desire to ask questions, or may otherwise seek to provide/obtain information relative to general matters of interest in the Township within the Board’s scope of responsibilities; and

WHEREAS, the Board may permit but is not required to allow for public comment at all of its regular, special, or emergency meetings; and

WHEREAS, the Board may establish rules and procedures for all speakers without respect to the identity of the speaker, the content of what the speaker says, or the viewpoint that the speaker holds; and

WHEREAS, public participation in any meeting held by the Board shall not disturb the lawful proceeding nor shall any act in any manner obstruct the official business of the Board.

NOW THEREFORE, the following standards are established by the Athens Township Board of Trustees and shall be a policy for public conduct and public participation:

1. Public comment shall be permitted as indicated on the agenda in the order of business or as the agenda may be amended.
2. The public is expected to remain seated except when entering or leaving the room or unless specifically requested by the Board Chairman (“the Chair) to approach a podium.
3. The Chair, having called a regular, special, or emergency meeting or a public hearing of the Board to order and determining that a quorum is present may allow a guest, other than a member or elected official, to speak in general or on a specific topic not on the agenda.
4. The Chair, in the case of a public hearing, shall request that each person wishing to speak swear or affirm prior to speaking that their testimony is true and accurate.

5. A guest, prior to speaking, shall state their name, address, and any paid or voluntary affiliation (if applicable) for the record.
6. Each speaker shall be limited to three (3) minutes for the presentation of a topic or concern. In the event that more than one person wishes to speak on the same subject, a limitation of fifteen (15) minutes shall be imposed on the total amount of time allowed for a group or topic presentation.
7. A speaker shall only speak once on a particular item or topic or only once on any particular single matter unless otherwise permitted by the Chair or a Board majority.
8. The Chair, unless overruled by a majority vote of the members of the Board, may extend the foregoing time limits relative to participation by an individual speaker or group.
9. No speaker may cede their time to another person.
10. The Board may not accept any documents or other materials presented by a speaker and such documents will only be included in the minutes by reference. The speaker shall be given the option to submit their documents or other materials to the Fiscal Officer or meeting secretary.
11. All speakers shall direct their comments exclusively to the Board and not to individuals in the audience. The Chair may, at their discretion, allow dialogue between any speaker, the Board, individual Board members, and/or any Township Staff or official in attendance.
12. The Board shall have no obligation to respond to any person addressing the Board during any meeting or public hearing but may elect to do so, at the sole discretion of the Board.
13. The Board has no obligation to take any action or to vote or otherwise consider any issues initially raised during the public comment period. The Board may, in the Board's sole discretion, take further action, may direct staff to research the subject matter, and to report necessary and relevant information to all members.
14. No attendee or speaker shall shout, yell, call out, or otherwise behave disruptively or engage in any act which obstructs or interferes with the due conduct of the meeting or make any utterance, gesture, or display which outrages the sensibilities of the Board or meeting attendees or disrupts the proceedings of the meeting.
15. No attendee or speaker shall direct threatening, menacing, or obscene language toward any other attendee, Board member, staff member, or official in attendance at a proceeding.
16. The Chair may remove, or request the assistance of law enforcement to remove, any person who prevents, obstructs, or delays the Board by any act that hampers or impedes the Board in the performance of its official, lawful duties, or otherwise interferes with the orderly progress of the meeting.
17. A majority vote by the Board may overrule a censure or removal order of the Chair.

Motion: Mr. Linscott

Second: Mr. Baker

Aye:

Nay:

Mr. Linscott:

Mr. Pierson:

Mr. Baker:

Attest:

Brenda Cox, Fiscal Officer

Duly resolved by the Athens Township Board of Trustees, Athens County, Ohio this 28th day of May, 2024.