

2022 Public Comment & Decorum Guidelines Update

The following updates have been made to the public comment & decorum guidelines, for the BCC's consideration:

- PUBLIC FORUM: For context, the policy now clarifies that meetings of the BCC are considered "limited public forums" and as such public comment may be limited to matters of public concern in Pinellas County.
- VIRTUAL COMMENTS: Added provisions to address virtual public comment via Zoom or telephone, to clarify that the public is responsible for ensuring that they have the proper software/technology to be heard during the meeting.
- SPEAKER'S ADDRESS: Clarified that a public commenter must provide their municipality or unincorporated area of residence; they do not need to provide an entire street address.
- VISUAL AIDS & AUDIO/VISUAL RECORDINGS: speakers who wish to use visual aids or present audio recordings as part of their public comment must comply with the following:
 - All content of such materials must be the speaker's own. Speakers may not present any visual or audio content recorded or taken from the internet, social media, television, radio, or other forms of media created, posted, streamed, owned, copyrighted, trademarked, or presented by anyone other than the Speaker themselves. The Chair may immediately interrupt and terminate a Speaker's speaking privilege on violation of this provision.
 - Copies of any visual aids or recordings that wish to be shared must be provided to the County 7 days prior to the meeting for review by County staff to ensure the material complies with this policy, does not violate copyrights, etc.
 - Visual aids that disrupt meetings or interfere with others' ability to view or participate in the meeting are not authorized.
 - Approved visual/audio aids must be clearly observable/audible to the BCC.
 - Handouts for the BCC must be presented to County staff at the Agenda Staff Table in the front of the meeting room along with the comment card.
- TIME FOR PUBLIC COMMENT:
 - Clarifies that the Chair and/or the BCC may limit the remarks of each Speaker to 3 minutes or less OR, the entire public comment period for any particular item to a reasonable, set length of time. (For example, all public comment on Agenda Item #XX could be limited to 1 hour.) If such a time limit on public comment is established, the time may be extended for an additional reasonable time period at the Chair's discretion.
- CITIZEN DECORUM GUIDELINES: The policy clarifies the following:
 - Speakers must be respectful of the Board, other members of the public, and others' opinions, and refrain from making personal attacks.
 - No political candidate campaigning, commercial advertising, solicitation, or defamation will be allowed as part of any presentation to the Board.
 - Presentations to the Board must relate to issues which are in the public interest, and which pertain to Pinellas County government activities.
 - All remarks must be addressed to the Board as a body and not to any individual member.
 - A Speaker's time is an opportunity to direct comments to the Board; it is not a question-and-answer session.
 - Any Speaker who becomes disorderly may, after a warning, be directed to end their comments. If the Speaker does not do so, they may be subject to removal from the meeting room.