

Guidelines for Public Comment

The Boones Mill Town Council welcomes public participation in local government. Involving the public is vital, and meetings must be a respectful and welcoming space for all viewpoints. This meeting has two opportunities for public comment. During "Public Comment on the Listed Agenda Items" at the beginning of the meeting, individuals have a three-minute time limit to speak unless otherwise decided. The other opportunity is "Public Comment on Other Matters" near the end of the meeting: also three minutes per speaker. During the rest of the meeting, interjections from the public are not permitted.

A sign-up sheet is provided for your name and address to allow acknowledgement of your comments. If you are with a group of people, you may want to have a spokesperson present your position to the Council and have others in agreement recognized by standing. If there are an unusually large number of people present to speak under this item, the Council may need to limit the number of speakers it can hear at the beginning of the meeting or limit the time each person may speak.

During public hearings, the Council will try to hear everyone who wishes to speak on a subject (sign-up lists for speakers are used), but sometimes discussion has to be limited because of time constraints. If a previous speaker has stated your position, you may make that known by reference. Applicants are limited to a ten-minute presentation of their proposal and will be allowed a five-minute rebuttal at the close of the public hearing. Other speakers are limited to one appearance of three minutes.

If additional time is required, it may be granted by consent of the Council for good cause, but such decision shall be at the sole discretion of the Town Council. The timekeeper will signal when your time is up. In order to give all speakers equal treatment and courtesy, the Council requests that speakers adhere to the following guidelines:

- Come forward to the speaker's podium and state your name and place of residence;
- Comments are audio recorded and noted in the minutes of the meeting;
- Do not speak from your seat or out of turn;
- Address comments directly to the Council as a whole;
- State your position and give facts and other data to back it up;
- If you represent a group or organization, you may ask others present to rise and be recognized;
- Back-and-forth debate is prohibited, and Council members will not engage in it;
- The Council usually listens to all speakers before responding to questions asked on issues raised;
- Give written statements and other supporting material to the Clerk (written comments are also welcome if you do not wish to speak);
- The Chair may ask speakers to form a line in the interest of time;
- Refrain from applause and other forms of approval or disapproval, as a courtesy to speakers;
- Please silence cellular telephones and similar devices.

The Town Council meeting has the objective of transacting public business. Public comment is an important part of the process, but the council chamber is a "limited public forum" in legal terms. The duration and topic of speech can be restricted, but there will be no restriction on speakers' viewpoints. Speakers are always welcome to contact Town officials by a variety of media outside of the meeting.