

TOWAMENCIN TOWNSHIP

POLICY FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN BOARD OF SUPERVISORS MEETINGS

1. This Policy's objective is to ensure compliance with the public participation requirement of the Sunshine Act: Open Meetings Law ("Law"), not suppress it in anyway. *See*, 65 Pa.C.S. 710.1 [Public Participation].
2. All official action and deliberations by a quorum of the Board of Supervisors ("Board") shall take place at meetings that are open to the public unless closed under Sections 707 (relating to exceptions to open meetings) or 708 (relating to executive sessions) of the Law. *See*, 65 Pa.C.S. §704 [Open meetings].
3. Under the Law and related decisional law, the Board shall provide a reasonable opportunity at each of its regular meetings and special meetings for Township residents and/or taxpayers to comment on matters of concern, official action, or deliberation which are or may be before the Board prior to taking official action. The Board has the option to accept all public comment at the beginning of the meeting. If the Board determines that there is not sufficient time at a meeting for the Township residents and/or taxpayers to comment, the Board may defer the comment period to the next regular meeting or to a special meeting occurring in advance of the next regular meeting. *See*, 65 Pa.C.S. §710.1(a) [Public Participation. General Rule].
4. Remember: public comment is not public conversation. While the Board is not required to answer questions posed during public comment, they may, in their sole discretion, answer such questions during public comment; after public comment prior to the conducting the meeting's business; at the next meeting; or a later date.
5. The Board hereby sets a **3-minute** time limit for each individual making an initial public comment at a public meeting and a **1-minute** follow-up will be allowed after all Township residents and/or taxpayers wishing to comment have done so. The Board may also set an overall time limit for all comments by the audience when the Board is faced with a major issue, there is a large public attendance, and/or is facing time constraints. This is done to permit the greatest number of individuals to express their views in a reasonable time frame and ensure compliance with the Law. If appropriate, the Board, in its sole discretion, may waive the time limit, otherwise it will be strictly enforced.
6. Please refrain from calling out or speaking prior to being recognized at a public meeting. When more than one person speaks at a time, neither the Board, nor other members of the audience can benefit from hearing your comments, and it is difficult to record your comments for the minutes.
7. In order to participate in a public meeting by way of a public comment, Township residents and/or taxpayers wishing to make a comment are asked to walk to the podium and wait to be acknowledged by the Board's Chairman prior to addressing the Board. Once so recognized, the speaker should properly identify before the Board (*i.e.*, state name and address or name and whether a Township resident or taxpayer). At times, the Board may require a signature on a sign-in sheet in order to be recognized to speak. This may be required when the Board is faced with a major issue, there is a large public attendance, and/or is facing time constraints.
8. A recognized speaker should (1) use the podium's microphone to be heard by the Board and the audience. This will also ensure that a summary of the comment can be accurately reflected in the meeting minutes; (2) try to avoid making unnecessarily repetitive comments so as not to cause delay in the meeting's agenda; and (3) refrain from making personal attacks or statements about the Board, Township staff, and/or members of the public.
9. The Board's meeting minutes will include date; meeting time/place; the names of the Board present; all recognized speakers and the subject of their comments; the substance of all discussion and official actions; and a record of all votes. The meeting minutes are not meant to be a transcript of the meeting; they are intended only to provide a summary of each comment/discussion.