

WINFIELD TOWNSHIP PUBLIC MEETINGS POLICY

Winfield Township, desiring to foster constructive discussion on matters of public importance while ensuring that public meetings remain orderly and on task to promote public involvement in public meetings, implements the following policy on public meetings governing all public meetings of the Township.

1. **Coverage:** This policy shall govern all public meetings of the Township including the Township Board, Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, and all other Township boards and commissions.
2. **Severability and Conflict of Laws:** This policy shall be deemed severable. Should any court of competent jurisdiction find a provision of this policy illegal or unenforceable, the remainder of this policy shall govern in full effect. Moreover, should a provision of a state or federal law preempt a provision of this policy, such preempting provision shall govern.
3. **Role of Supervisor and Chairperson; Enforcement of Policy:** The Township Supervisor and/or chairperson of a particular Township board, commission, or committee are responsible for conducting meetings and for facilitating the Public Comment Period (defined below). The Supervisor and/or chairperson (or their designee) is responsible for enforcing time limits on speakers during the Public Comment Period, issuing warnings related to violations of the Public Meetings Policy, and determining whether individuals who violate this policy (or otherwise disrupt a public meeting) must leave the public meeting to maintain order.
4. **Public Comment:** Per the Open Meetings Act (Act 267 of 1976, MCL 15.261 *et seq.*), the Township is committed to allowing all persons attending a public meeting to have an opportunity to be heard during at least one designated time of the meeting. The below are reasonable rules regulating public comment under MCL 15.263(5) and to minimize disruptions under MCL 15.263(1).
 - a. *Comment Period:* Each public meeting of the Township shall include at least one portion of the meeting specifically devoted to public comment (the “Public Comment Period”).
 - b. *Direct Comments to Public Body:* To ensure that meetings remain orderly and productive, members of the public may only direct comments towards the Township board, commission, or committee during the Public Comment Period. Further, only one member of the public may speak at any given time during the Public Comment Period.

- c. *Questions During Public Comment:* The Public Comment Period is an opportunity for Township officials to receive constructive feedback from members of the public and allow the public to ask Township officials questions and voice their thoughts and concerns regarding public policy. However, to ensure to that members of the public have the same amount of time to address Township officials and to hear all members of the public, Township officials should generally refrain from answering direct questions brought from the public (e.g., a questions and answers period) during the Public Comment Period unless an official, in their discretion, believes answering a question will benefit the public at-large while still maintaining an orderly meeting.
- d. *Speaker Identification:* Members of the public participating in the Public Comment Period should give their name, address, and announce any unique interest they have. They may speak on any issue that may be of concern to the citizens of the Township. Individuals that participate in the Public Comment Period are not required to be Township residents.
- e. *Order of Speakers, Residents:* The Supervisor or chairperson conducting a public meeting of the Township may make an announcement at the beginning of the Public Comment Period to request that residents of the Township be able to speak first during the period; however, at no time shall a resident be given more time than a non-resident to address Township officials
- f. *Speaker Conduct:* Those participating in the Public Comment Period should refrain from profanity, vulgarity, speaking out of turn, name-calling, making comments that exceed their allocated time limit, directing comments at individuals, or any other conduct that will disrupt a public meeting of the Township.
- g. *Audience and Township Official Conduct:* During the Public Comment Period, Township officials and the audience shall not, in bad faith, interfere with or interrupt those members of the public who decide to participate in the Public Comment Period including by making comments, jeering, booing, applauding, or other disrupting behavior. Township officials, in their discretion, may respond to questions and concerns brought to light during the Public Comment Portion, but should allow each member of the public to finish the entirety of his or her public comment before responding.
- h. *Speaker Time Limit:* Individual members of the public may not speak for more than two (2) minutes during the Public Comment Period even if they speak on behalf of a larger contingent of the public. This time allotment is the “total” time allocated to an individual per meeting. No speaker may yield their time to another. Depending on the number those who desire to speak during the Public

Comment Period, the Supervisor or chairperson of a Township body may increase the total individual comment time period in their discretion.

5. **Public Meetings, Generally:** The policies listed below are general policies pertaining to public meetings of the Township as reasonable rules to minimize disruptions and facilitate efficient meetings under MCL 15.263(1). The Township shall comply with other requirements under the Open Meetings Act or other applicable law.
 - a. *Interruptions and Conduct:* Members of the public attending a Township meeting shall not interrupt Township officials during a meeting and shall keep their volumes at a level to ensure that all members of the public can hear Township officials. Township officials and the public shall conduct themselves in a manner to maintain order during a public meeting and should not: (1) use profanity; (2) insult other individuals; (3) engage in name-calling; or (4) make threats; and (5) engage in any other disruptive behavior. Both Township officials and members of the public should treat all individuals with respect.
 - b. *Recording Meetings:* Any individual may videotape, record, and/or broadcast public meetings either in part or in their entirety if they do so in a manner to not interrupt the public meeting and in compliance with this policy and other applicable laws.
 - c. *Meetings Open to Public:* During a public meeting, the Township shall ensure that doors are open and the meeting is posted in compliance with applicable law.
 - d. *Conducting Business:* A public meeting should be conducted per the agenda provided to a Township board, commission, or committee by its chairperson, the Supervisor, or other appropriate official.
6. **Deviation:** At any time, a Township board, commission, or committee may deviate from this policy to comply with applicable state law, to take actions to facilitate public participation in Township meetings, maintain order of a public meeting consistent with the Open Meetings Act, or if determined appropriate by such public body at a particular meeting due to unique circumstances. Such deviations shall not create a cause of action against the Township. Moreover, for bodies such as the Planning Commission that are authorized by law to adopt bylaws or rules, such adopted bylaws or rules may deviate from this policy to the extent that the bylaws or rules comply with law.

Adopted by Township on January 13, 2022.

WINFIELD TOWNSHIP
RESOLUTION TO ADOPT PUBLIC MEETINGS POLICY

At a regular meeting of the Township Board of Winfield Township, Montcalm County, Michigan, held at the Winfield Township Hall on January 13, 2022, at 10:30 a.m.

PRESENT: Cathy Killinger, John Black, Colleen Stebbins, Phyllis Larson

ABSENT: Steve Cole

The following resolution was offered by Cathy Killinger and supported by John Black.

WHEREAS, Winfield Township desires to foster constructive discussion on matters of public importance while ensuring that public meetings remain orderly and on task; and

WHEREAS, to that end, the Township desires to implement a policy on public participation during Township meetings including meetings of the Township Board Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, and all other boards and commissions of the Township;

WHEREAS, the Township is committed to complying with the Open Meetings Act (Act 267 of 1976, as amended MCL 15.261 et seq.) including by allowing all persons in attendance at a public meeting to have an opportunity to be heard during a designated Public Comment Period.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLBED by the Winfield Township Board, Montcalm County, Michigan as follows:

1. The Township adopts the attached document entitled "Public Meetings Policy, which shall become part of the Township's Administrative Policies and Procedures.
2. All prior resolutions inconsistent herewith are hereby rescinded. Moreover, this Public Meetings Policy" shall supersede any conflicting prior policies adopted by the Township Board governing the same subject matter including in the Administrative Policy and Procedures.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

AYE: Cathy Killing, John Black, Colleen Stebbins, Phyllis Larson.

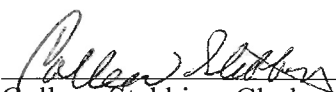
NAY: None

RESOLUTION DECLARED ADOPTED.

CERTIFICATION

STATE OF MICHIGAN)
)ss
COUNTY OF MONTCALM)

I, the undersigned, the duly qualified and acting Clerk for Winfield Township, Montcalm County, Michigan, DO HEREBY CERTIFY that the forgoing is a true and complete copy of certain proceedings taken by the Township of Winfield Township at a meeting held on 13th day of January, 2022, and further certify that the above Resolution was adopted at said meeting.



Colleen Stebbins, Clerk
Winfield Township