OGLETHORPE COUNTY

Board of Commissioners
Rules of Decorum

The Oglethorpe County Board of Commissioners adopts the following Rules of Decorum to ensure orderly, respectful, and efficient conduct of all public meetings. These rules apply to all attendees, including board members, county staff, presenters, media, and the public.

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1. General Conduct

1. All attendees shall conduct themselves with dignity, courtesy, and respect at all times.
2. Disruptive behavior, including shouting, arguing, personal attacks, profanity, or threats, is strictly prohibited.
3. Pursuant to O.C.G.A Section 16-11-34, disruptive or disorderly conduct during meetings is prohibited. Individuals who interfere with proceedings may be asked to leave the meeting. Failure to comply may result in removal by law enforcement and possible criminal charges.

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2. Public Participation

1. Public comment shall occur only during designated times on the agenda or as otherwise authorized by the Chair and must relate to county business.
2. Speakers must come to the podium (if provided), state their name and address for the record, and direct all remarks to the Board—not to staff, other attendees, or the audience.
3. Comments shall be limited to the timeframe established by the Chair (commonly 3–5 minutes per speaker).
4. Speakers may not yield or transfer time to another individual unless expressly permitted by the Chair.
5. Personal attacks, defamatory statements, or disclosure of confidential information (including personnel matters not authorized for public discussion) are prohibited.

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3. Audience Conduct

1. Applause, cheering, booing, or other audible expressions are not permitted, except for brief applause during ceremonial recognitions.
2. Signs, banners, or objects that obstruct views or create hazards are not permitted inside the meeting room.
3. Side conversations, use of loud electronic devices, or any activity that disrupts the meeting shall not be allowed.
4. Mobile devices shall be silenced.

4. Media and Recording

1. Recording (audio or video) is permitted as authorized by Georgia law, provided it does not disrupt the proceedings or obstruct visibility.
2. Media equipment must be placed in a location designated by the Chair or County staff to ensure safety and maintain unobstructed pathways.
3. Flash photography is prohibited during the conduct of business items.

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5. Commissioners, Staff, and Presenters

1. Board members and staff shall conduct business in a professional and orderly manner and adhere to parliamentary procedure.
2. Commissioners shall refrain from interrupting each other, the Chair, presenters, or public speakers except as allowed by procedure.
3. All remarks shall be addressed to the Chair or the full Board, not to individual members or the public.
4. Staff and invited presenters shall address the Board only when recognized by the Chair.

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6. Chair's Authority

1. The Chair is responsible for preserving order and decorum at all times.
2. The Chair may:
    - Call a speaker or participant to order
    - Rule a comment or action out of order
    - Terminate a speaker's time for violating decorum
    - Recess or adjourn the meeting to restore order
3. All rulings of the Chair stand unless overturned by the Board in accordance with parliamentary procedure.

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7. Enforcement

1. Individuals who violate these rules may receive a verbal warning.
2. Continued violations may result in removal from the meeting.
3. In cases involving threats, physical aggression, or significant disruption, law enforcement may intervene immediately.
4. Violations may also result in limitations on future participation as allowed by law.

8. Adoption and Review

These Rules of Decorum shall be effective immediately upon adoption by the Oglethorpe County Board of Commissioners and may be amended as needed to ensure the orderly and efficient conduct of public business.