

## **GLENOLDEN BOROUGH COUNCIL PUBLIC COMMENT POLICY**

### **Purpose**

The Council welcomes the public to its meetings and recognizes the value to Borough governance of public comment on issues concerning the Borough. The Council encourages the sharing of ideas and the expression of concern. The Council also recognizes its responsibility for proper governance of the Borough and its need to conduct business in an orderly and efficient manner.

To facilitate the fair and orderly expression of such comment, the Council publishes these Guidelines in conjunction with Title 65 Pa.C.S.A. § 710.1 of the Pennsylvania Sunshine Act.

### **Overview**

Normally, there will be two periods for public comment during a public meeting. The first public comment portion of the meeting will be reserved for items that are on the agenda for a vote that evening. The second public comment is at the conclusion of the meeting and is related to any other Borough issue.

All residents wishing to make a public comment must appear in person. No comments will be taken via telephone, electronic means, or otherwise in absentia.

When the same comments on the same topic have been presented by different speakers, the Council President may request that additional comments on that topic be limited to those who have new information to present.

The periods of public comment are not designed or intended to be question and answer times. The Council uses this time to listen to community questions and concerns, but generally will not respond immediately to individual requests and cannot take formal action on non-agenda items. It is important to Council that an answer to questions be accurate. If a resident who has given public comment on a matter wishes to receive answers to question(s), he/she may submit questions in writing to the Borough Manager for response.

The Council reserves the right to limit public comment that involves a complaint about an individual staff member, a personnel action of a confidential nature (e.g., discipline, medical condition), or pending litigation, including but not limited to matters filed or which may be filed before an agency, department, or court, or which involve matters of a criminal nature, or concerning matters under investigation. Such matters should be reduced to writing and sent to the Borough Manager.

Consistent with State law a member of the public may choose to record the meeting. Video recordings shall take place in the back row of the room.

## **PROCEDURE**

Commenters must be taxpayers or residents of the Borough.

The Council may set a maximum time for comment for any given public comment period or for any given meeting. Generally, the comment period for each speaker is three (3) minutes; each person may speak only once during the comment period. A designee of the President of Council will keep the time. If a member of the public is still speaking at the end of three minutes the President of council will advise that their time has expired and ask them to conclude.

If a speaker represents a group, he/she may want to have others in agreement stand or be recognized while he/she speaks, rather than having all speak on the same issue. The Council President may, with consensus of the Council, enlarge or reduce the time allocated for individuals to speak.

The Council President may end public comment if the comments are made by the same individuals and/or become lengthy and repetitive, or otherwise as necessary to efficiently conduct the meeting.

If there is not sufficient time for public comment during a meeting, or public comment is lengthy on a topic, the Council may defer additional public comment to the next regular meeting or to a special meeting occurring before the next regular meeting.

## **Decorum**

Council members and speakers alike should conduct themselves with decorum and should expect each other to be courteous and respectful even when there is disagreement with the views of others.

Comments are to be addressed to the President of Council. Speakers will not address their comments to one individual Council member, nor to the Borough Manager, nor to a staff member, nor to the press, nor to the audience.

No one, including Council members and those making public comment, will be permitted to engage in personal attacks against individual Council members or employees.

To maintain respect for all points of view, no clapping, booing or any other showing of support or non-support is allowed.

The President of Council may interrupt or terminate a commenter's time when the statement is beyond the allotted time period, personally directed, abusive, obscene, or irrelevant to Borough business. In the event a commenter does not adhere to the Council President's admonitions the Council President may conclude the public comment section and proceed with the meeting.

Any Council member can call for point of order to express concern over direction of comments.