



Rules for Public Comment

I. Purpose and Application:

A. Purpose: Public engagement is a vital component to the democratic process and it assists the Board of Trustees in shaping effective policy for the Village. Further, the President and Trustees volunteered to serve as a voice for residents, so resident participation naturally enhances that role. To help balance public participation during public meetings with the obligation to complete necessary scheduled business, many public bodies establish a set of rules and procedures to help manage the public comment process.

B. Application: The rules and procedures adopted herein (“Rules”) by the Village Board of Trustees shall govern the Village Board of Trustees, committees, commissions and other public bodies that have been created by the Board; provided, however, that in the event that a different or more specific protocol or procedure is required by law, or by a declaration of a federal, state, or local emergency, the different or more specific protocol or procedure shall govern and control. For the purposes of these Rules, meetings of those bodies shall be defined as “public body meetings.”

II. Forms of Comment:

A. Primary Methods: Residents, visitors and other interested parties generally have two primary methods for participation in a public body meeting. Those methods are:

1. Written: Persons may submit, in advance of or at a public body meeting, written comments for the respective public body. Comments may be submitted by mail, courier, electronic mail, or presented in-person during a public body meeting. Written comments submitted in advance of a meeting should be addressed to the respective public body and should contain the contact information of the commenter. Submitting a written comment does not eliminate an individual’s opportunity to address the public body in-person at the meeting. However, it may be used as an effective means to convey complex information when presenting an overview in-person.
2. In-Person: Persons in attendance at public body meetings may wish to address the public bodies during the meeting. Generally, there are two times to do so and those are addressed in the Rules for In-Person Comments in Section III of these Rules.

B. Audio/Visual Aids: On occasion, speakers may desire to use an audio/visual aid to supplement their presentation. Physical handouts such as photographs and petitions should be presented to the Village Clerk or presider of the meeting. The Village Board does not routinely utilize electronic aids during public meetings. However, there are times when a presenter has a particular purpose for needing to use an electronic presentation aid such as a computer projector. Presenters wishing to address a public body with the aid of an electronic device shall notify the Village Manager of the request in advance. The written request shall outline the device(s) desired to be used, describe how the electronic aid will improve the clarity of the presentation, and state the desired length of the presentation. Absent extenuating circumstances, the written request must be received by the Village Manager at least two business days prior to the public body meeting. The Village Manager shall carefully consider the material submitted and make a determination. A request may be denied for several reasons including but not limited to: availability of equipment, meeting room characteristics, described necessity to enhance delivery of the desired message, impact on the efficiency of the meeting and length of the presentation.

III. Rules for In-Person Comments:

A. General Procedure: The Village welcomes public comment at meetings for both items being discussed as part of the topic being discussed and new items that are not on the meeting's agenda. Members of the public wishing to comment on specific agenda items will have the opportunity to do so once the presentation has concluded and the Village Board has had an opportunity to ask initial questions. At that time, the meeting Presider will ask if there are members of the public who wish to comment, or commenters may ask to be recognized. Members of the public wishing to comment on items not on listed on the agenda, but related to Village business, will have the opportunity to do so during the meeting's designated public comment period.

B. Germane Comments: To help keep meetings effective and efficient, presenters' comments must be germane to Village business and individuals must not be disruptive, threatening or act in a discourteous manner. Robert's Rules of Order, as revised, shall govern the conduct of Village business (Village Code Section 30.44) to the extent these do not conflict with applicable law.

C. Specific Rules: The following rules shall be followed by members of the public who are addressing the Village Board or other Village public bodies. Members of the public who refuse to conform with the rules despite being cautioned to do so by the presider may be asked to stop speaking and/or leave the meeting.

1. Leave to Speak and Order of Speakers: No person shall address the public body until the Village President or Chairman (collectively referred to as the "Presider") has recognized and given him or her leave to speak. Speakers will be entitled to address the public body on a first-recognized basis by the Presider. If a speaker sign-up form was passed out, speakers will address the public body in the order they called by the Presider.

2. Speaker Identification: Each speaker shall state his or her name so it can be recorded in the minutes of the meeting. The speaker may also provide other identifying information about himself or herself.
3. Representation of Others: If a speaker is representing or speaking on behalf of other persons, groups or entities, then the speaker shall state the nature of that representation.
4. Pertinence of Comments: Public comments shall relate to matters within the purview of the respective public body. Comments shall relate to either items on the agenda or other matters related to Village business.
5. Repetitive Comments: Speakers shall refrain from repeating their own comments and testimony and the comments and testimonies of others. The Presider may limit or end the speaker's time if the speaker is excessively repetitive.
6. Poor Behavior Prohibited: No person shall engage in disruptive, discourteous, belligerent, impertinent, threatening, disparaging, or otherwise uncivil behavior. The Presider may limit or end the comments of any person who engages in this conduct.
7. Interruption of Speakers: Members of the public shall refrain from interrupting the designated speaker. The Presider may interrupt a speaker at any time to enforce the rules.
8. Referral to Committee and Commissions: When appropriate, matters raised by the public may be referred, without further debate or discussion, by the Presider, to the appropriate committee, commission or other public body of the Village.
9. Individual Speaker Time Limit: The Presider may establish a time limit for all commenters. The established time limit shall not be less than three minutes per commenter. No commenter may speak for longer than the time limit established by the Presider unless the Presider grants additional time for that speaker based on the circumstances at-hand (such as representation by that speaker of a larger group of persons, complexity of the speaker's topic, or other factors). The determination to designate a longer period for a speaker rests in the discretion of the Presider. The Presider may also shorten a speaker's time limit based on repetition of comments or other circumstances as provided by the rules of public comment including efficient conduct of the meeting.
10. Recording: Recording of the proceedings of a public body meeting may be done by news media representatives or the public as permitted by law, provided that recordings are not disruptive to the members of the public body or those in attendance. Individuals wishing to either video tape or audio tape a public body meeting must adhere to the following rules:

- a. The person wishing to make a recording must notify the Village Manager or his designee prior to the meeting of the desire to record the proceedings. Notice should be provided before close of office hours on the day of the meeting to be recorded;
- b. At the start of any meeting being audio or video recorded, the Presider will announce to those in attendance that the meeting is being recorded by the Village and others;
- c. Video and/or audio recording must be done in such a way that it does not interfere with the operation of the meeting;
- d. Arrangements for placement of any special microphones or lighting equipment must be made with a Village staff member prior to the start of the meeting;
- e. Those using video cameras to record the meeting should be located behind the audience area;
- f. During a public hearing where private individuals may provide testimony, any person recording the proceedings must adhere to the wishes of any other individual who expresses a desire not to be video or audio recorded in accordance with state law.
- g. Persons recording a meeting are requested to submit a copy of the recording to the Village Manager. The Village will provide a blank CD or flash drive to the person recording for this purpose where practical; and
- h. If an individual performs videotaping or audio taping, the Village shall make an audio tape recording of the meeting, where possible.

IV. Reasonable Accommodations:

All public meetings are opened to all members of the public. Those wishing to address a public body may request reasonable accommodations be made in order for them to do so and shall contact the Village Manager at (847) 251-1666 prior to the meeting date to make the request.

V. Public Comment During Virtual Meetings:

In the event of an emergency that limits or restricts the ability of the public body to conduct in-person meetings, the rules and procedures for public comment for virtual meetings shall be modified in accordance with this Section V. Despite any restriction on in-person meetings during such an emergency, it shall remain the desire and intent of the Village to provide the public with an appropriate avenue for engagement in the democratic process. The following rules have been established to balance the importance of public participation with the need to narrow the avenues for that participation during the emergency period.

For virtual meetings during an emergency period, as determined by federal or state officials, or the Village President, the form of public comment shall be in writing, provided to the Village no less than 30 minutes prior to the start of the public meeting. The agenda posted for all meetings during the emergency period shall, to the extent possible, prominently provide notice of the public comment restrictions and provide the email address utilized to receive comments. Unless otherwise stated in the agenda, written comments may be sent by courier, hand delivery to Village Hall, or electronic delivery (info@vok.org). Those persons needing a reasonable accommodation should contact the Village Manager no less than 4 hours prior to the scheduled meeting to discuss alternate options for addressing the public body.

Comments received within the established timeframes shall be provided to the Village Board in advance of the meeting. Comments related to an item on the agenda for action shall be read aloud during the consideration of the matter. Comments not related to actionable items on the agenda will be read during the Business from the Public section of the agenda, which typically occurs at near the end of business. The Village President or person presiding over the meeting may also accept live comment to the extent practical. Written comments received after the designated time period will be provided to the public body within a reasonable time after conclusion of the meeting, and will be read aloud at the subsequent meeting of the public body. All comments will be read for up to three minutes per commenter. The name and address of the commenter, if provided, will be read along with the text of the comment.

All written comments received shall be retained in the files of the Village Clerk for the required period of time, but shall not be considered attachments to the official minutes of the public body.

The Village will not accept for public comment during virtual meetings: (1) audio, video, or moving images; or (2) comments containing abusive or obscene language.