

Huntington Township, Adams County, Pennsylvania

Public Participation Policy at Township Meetings

- 1. Purpose-** The Township recognizes the value of public comment on township issues and the importance of involving members of the community in township meetings. The township also recognizes its responsibility for proper and effective governance and the need to conduct its business in an orderly and effective manner.
- 2. Authority-** Pursuant to 65 Pa.C.S. §710 and § 710.1, the Township shall establish rules and regulations regarding public participation necessary to conduct its meetings and to maintain order.
- 3. In order to permit fair and orderly public comment, all township meetings, except for Executive sessions, shall be open to the public and a suitable time shall be offered for residents and taxpayers to comment on matters of concern, official action or deliberations before the Township prior to official action.**
- 4. The Township shall accept public comment on agenda items before voting or official action is taken on the agenda item. No participant may speak more than once during public comment on the agenda item. Each resident and/or taxpayer who wishes to provide public comment shall be allocated, and shall be limited to, a maximum of three (3) minutes per agenda item, not to exceed in the aggregate ten (10) minutes per meeting relative to all agenda items.**

The Board shall accept public comment at the end of the meeting for non-agenda items, which is limited to commenting on matters of concern, official action or deliberation which are or may be before the body prior to taking official action. No participant may speak more than once during this public comment period. The comment period shall be limited to three (3) minutes per individual, and ten (10) minutes total per topic.

If the Board determines there is not sufficient time at a meeting for public comments, the comment period may be deferred to the next regular meeting or to a special meeting occurring before the next regular meeting.

- 5. The presiding chair at each township meeting shall follow township policy for the conduct of public meetings. Where his/her ruling is disputed, it may be overruled by a majority of those Board members present and voting.**

Participants must be recognized by the presiding officer and must preface their comments by an announcement of their name, address and subject matter. The right to public comment is only guaranteed to taxpayers and residents of the Township. Non-residents and non-taxpayers must proffer their reasons for wanting to speak, and will only be permitted to speak at the discretion of the presiding chair.

No participant may speak more than once. The comment period shall be limited to five (5) minutes per individual, and ten (10) minutes total per topic, per public comment period.

All statements shall be directed to the presiding officer; no participant may address or question Board members individually.

The presiding chair at each meeting shall be empowered to terminate the public comment or presentation of any individual when, the comments are not on matters of concern, official action or deliberation which are or may be before body prior to taking official action. Examples of comments subject to termination are discussions that are irrelevant to Township matters, outside the Townships authority or jurisdiction and items that have been previously decided by the Township.

The presiding officer may also:

- 1. Interrupt or terminate a participant's statement when the statement is too lengthy, personally directed, abusive obscene, or irrelevant, or not in the confines of the topic.**
- 2. Call for recess or adjournment to another time when the lack of public propriety interferes with the orderly conduct of the meeting as to warrant such action.**
- 3. Request the presence of law enforcement in the removal of a person or persons when the decorum of the meeting is hampered.**