

EL PASO COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT ORDER



Commissioners Court Public Comment Policy

Adopted Date: March 18, 2019

Revised Date:

Purpose

The El Paso County Commissioners Court ("Court") adopts these rules governing public comment during regular and special Commissioners Court meetings. The intent of the rules is to ensure efficiency, maximize citizen participation and maintain public order.

Authority

During each regular and special meeting, members of the public shall have the opportunity to address the Commissioners Court on any issue within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Court. This includes an inquiry as to an agenda item or public comment regarding a subject that has not been included on the agenda, as authorized by Texas Government Code Section 551.042.

Time Limits

1. The speaking time limit for an individual speaker is five (5) minutes under the public comment portion of a regular Commissioners court meeting.
 - It is recommended that groups designate a spokesperson to avoid repetitiveness.
2. During the discussion of any other posted agenda item, the speaking time limit is five minutes per person. Time cannot be allocated from one speaker to another.

Definitions

"Public Comment Forms" – Any person wishing to speak during public comment or on an agenda item at a regular or special meeting must fill out and present a form to the Commissioners Court Recorder prior to the commencement of the Commissioners Court regular meeting on Mondays at 9:30 a.m. or special session meetings, scheduled on various days of the week, at 9 a.m. Failure to do so could result in the Commissioners Court not recognizing or allowing you to speak.

All public comment forms are available at the El Paso County's [Government Meeting Agendas](#) webpage. For any questions or clarifications, please contact us at:

500 E. San Antonio, Room 302A
El Paso, Texas 79901
Phone: (915) 546-2215

"Presiding Officer" – is defined as the El Paso County Judge or designee.

Guidelines for All Speakers

- Speaker order is usually decided on a first-come, first-served basis (using the date and time the public comment form is received).
- Each speaker will be called to speak by the Presiding Officer. We ask that you refrain from disruptive behavior that will prevent the next speaker from hearing their name called or beginning their comments.
- When speaking, please state your name and the agenda item that you will be addressing.
- Each speaker promptly shall conclude all comments when his or her time to speak has expired. A thirty (30) second warning and a (15) second warning will be given by the Commissioners Court Recorder, to allow the speaker to finalize speaking remarks.
- No person shall engage in political advertising contrary to state law.
- The Presiding Officer reserves the right to interrupt, request that the microphone be turned off and excuse a speaker when time allocated has expired, or if the speaker otherwise violates these guidelines.

Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items

Persons wishing to address the Commissioners Court on matters not on the agenda during the initial period for public comment must submit a public comment form to the Commissioners Court recorder prior to commencement of that meeting. Speaker order will be determined by sequence of how those sign up requests are received. During non-agenda items, public comments may not be addressed to staff or other members of the public, however, the Commissioners Court may ask staff to review an issue, or ask to have the matter placed on a future agenda.

Rules of Decorum

It is imperative that those who wish to speak during public comment adhere to these rules and guidelines so that El Paso County public meetings can proceed in a timely manner.

- A member of the public addressing the Commissioners Court during regular and special meetings shall only do so from the podium or designated table.
- When speaking please state your name for the record.
- No threats or disruptive behavior will be tolerated. Any person violating this policy will be required to leave immediately upon direction by an El Paso County representative.
- All persons attending a regular or special meeting shall obey any lawful order or direction of the Presiding Officer.
- Members of the audience and speakers shall not wear or display signs, flags, banners, hats, props or similar items larger than 8 ½ by 11 inches that can obstruct the view of other audience members or can be used as a weapon. This includes items that can be illuminated or be attached to any pole, stick or other device.

Requests for Accommodations

The County of El Paso is ADA accessible. American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter assistance or other translation services can be provided upon request. For detailed accessibility information and for accommodation requests, please contact El Paso County ADA Coordinator Amanda Manning, at (915) 546-2218 or visit our [ADA Disability Services](#) webpage.