



TOWN OF ST. JAMES  
Effective April 6, 2022

**Policy on Public Comment**

A public comment period shall be included as an item of business at the end of the agenda at the regular monthly meeting of the Town Council. Public comment related to a Public Hearing will be taken during the Public Hearing. There will be no public comment periods held during council work sessions, committee meetings, special meetings, or workshops, unless otherwise specified by the Council. All comments and suggestions to the Town Council during the public comment period shall be subject to the following guidelines:

- **Sign Up** – Each person desiring to speak during a public comment period shall sign up to speak prior to the start of the meeting on the form provided at the door, by listing the speaker's name, address, and topic on which he or she will speak. Any related documents, printed comments, or materials the speaker wishes to be distributed to the Council shall be delivered to the Town Clerk in sufficient amounts (seven copies) at least fifteen minutes prior to the start of the meeting. Persons wishing simply to speak may sign up at any point before the meeting begins.
- **Public Comment Period** – A total of thirty (30) minutes shall be set aside for public comment for regular agenda items as well as other topics pertaining to town business. At the end of this time, those who signed up to speak but have not yet been recognized may be requested to hold their comments until the next meeting's public comment period, at which time they will be given priority for expression. Alternatively, the Council, in its discretion, may extend the time allotted for public comment.
- **Time Allowance** – Each speaker will have a maximum of three (3) minutes to speak. A speaker may not sign up to speak more than once during the same public comment period. No time may be yielded to a speaker by another speaker.
- **Time Keeping** – The designated Timekeeper will be the Town Clerk, who will begin timing the speaker after recording the speaker's name and address for the public record. The Timekeeper will also time and record the time allotted to public comment. An additional thirty (30) minutes will be allotted for public comment during a public hearing.
- **Common Topics** – To avoid repetitiveness, groups are encouraged to select a spokesperson to speak on their behalf. At the request of the Council, groups of

persons supporting or opposing the same positions may be asked to designate a spokesperson to speak, and the designated spokesperson may be allotted up to eight (8) minutes. Additional time may be allowed at the discretion of the Council.

- Speaking Order – Speakers will be acknowledged to speak in the order in which their names appear on the sign-up sheet. Speakers will address the Council from the designated area and begin their remarks by stating their name and address.
- Council Response – Public comment is not intended to require the Council to answer impromptu questions. Speakers should expect the Council to refrain from engaging in a dialogue, except to the extent necessary to clarify a speaker's position. The allotted time for speaking from the podium is the method to address Council during the public comment period. The Council will not entertain questions or comments called out from the audience. The Council will not take action on an item presented during a public comment. When appropriate, the Town may refer inquiries and items brought up during public comment to the Town Manager for follow up.
- Topic Exclusions – Speakers will not comment on any topic which is the subject of a public hearing for the same meeting; matters which concern the candidacy of any person seeking public office, including the candidacy of the speaker; discussion of the sale or lease of fixed assets if the speaker is a party to the transaction; matters which are closed session topics including, but not limited to, matters within the attorney-client privilege and land acquisition; and/or all other matters which are made confidential by law.
- Speaker Etiquette – Speakers will address all comments to the Council as a whole, not to one or more members as individuals, and not to any town staff member or audience member. Speakers will address Council with respect and courtesy and will not do or say anything that will interfere with the dignity and decorum of the meeting. Discussion between speakers and the audience will not be allowed.
- Public Comment Prior to Voting on Old/New Business Items – On substantive items as determined by the Mayor and after introduction of the item and any presentation by staff on the item, the Mayor will seek comment from the public prior to a motion and vote on the issue by the Council. Time allowance shall be the same as bullet #3 above.