



RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT MANTUA TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE MEETINGS

(Adopted 1/2/2023 by RESOLUTION 32-2023)

WHEREAS, under the New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act (Act), N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 *et seq.*, all public meetings are open to the public;

WHEREAS, pursuant to the Act (N.J.S.A. 10:4-12(a)), Township Committee is required to set aside a portion of each public meeting for public comment on issues which may be of concern to the public, the length of which portion to be determined by Township Committee;

WHEREAS, the Township Committee has historically allowed members of the public to address the Committee in order to permit and encourage public participation at such meetings;

WHEREAS, the Township Committee of the Township of Mantua wishes to ensure that all of its citizens have the opportunity to attend Township Committee meetings and offer comment;

WHEREAS, the Committee has determined that the enactment of rules and regulations for the conduct of such meetings and public participation would help clarify the process and encourage the public to participate in Township business;

WHEREAS, the Township Committee of the Township of Mantua highly values the input of its citizens in making important decisions which affect the residents of our community;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Township Committee of the Township of Mantua, in the County of Gloucester and State of New Jersey that the following rules shall be applied to all public comment portions of the meeting:

(1) The public is invited to attend and observe all public meetings of the Township Committee. Persons shall be heard at any public meeting as provided herein.

(2) At any public meeting for which a member of the public has properly requested to address Committee, such person may address the Committee as to the purpose set forth in the request to speak. After acknowledgment from the Mayor, each person to address Committee must state his or her name and residence or business address. Members of the public are limited to a five-minute time limit to address Committee. The time limit does not apply (1) to persons invited by the Committee to address the respective governing body, or (2) to the extent said person is responding to a question posed by Committee member. The Mayor may restrict or limit the time allotted to a person whose remarks are repetitive or not germane to the matter under consideration by Committee. At meetings with unusually large attendance, the Mayor may impose such additional rules or time limitations as are deemed appropriate from time to time based on business before the Committee and the number of persons wishing to speak.

(3) Members of the public are not permitted to ask questions of, or debate with, Committee unless permitted to do so by the Mayor. All remarks shall be addressed to the Committee as a body and not to any member thereof.

(4) No member of the public, or any other person in attendance at a meeting of Committee, shall engage in any personally offensive or abusive remarks or conduct. No person shall behave in any manner that is unruly, disruptive, or may endanger the health, safety, or welfare of said person or other members of the public, or otherwise act in a manner not in compliance with these rules. Any person violating the rules herein is subject to removal from the meeting if he or she refuses to comply after being advised to do so.

(5) Other Rules of Conduct and Decorum for public participation during Committee Meetings for addressing the Mayor and Committee during public hearings on ordinances or resolutions which require public hearings or during the public portion of the Committee Meetings are as follows:

a. All members attending Township Committee Meetings must treat each other; the Mayor and Committee Members; and Township Employees with respect.

b. Shouting out from the audience without being recognized to speak is strictly prohibited.

c. No person shall, at any time, engage in any personally offensive or abusive remarks or behavior to the Mayor, Committee, Township Employees or any other member of the public.

d. No person shall engage in any express or implied speech that involves any other person's race, color, religion, gender, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin or ethnicity.

e. The Mayor may restrict, limit or prohibit any speech, remarks or questions that are repetitive or not germane to any matter not within the jurisdiction of the Township Committee. The Mayor may, at his/her discretion, limit the public portion segment at a particular Committee meeting to thirty (30) minutes.

f. Persons making public comment may not yield their time to another speaker and each individual is limited to speaking once during a particular public comment period for a period of time not to exceed five (5) minutes.

g. The Chief of Police or such other member of the Police Department as he/she may designate, shall be designated as the Sergeant-at-Arms of the Township Committee Meetings. The Sergeant-at-Arms shall carry out all orders and instructions given by the Mayor for the purpose of maintaining order and decorum at the Township Committee Meetings and enforcing these rules.

h. The Township Solicitor shall be the Parliamentarian.

i. Meetings shall be conducted in accordance with these Rules and Roberts Rules of Order for items not covered in these regulations.

j. Members of the public who make comments that are germane to an ordinance or resolution that is under consideration or during the general public portion of the Committee Meeting for matters which are within the jurisdiction of the Township Committee shall be allowed to do so in an uninterrupted manner unless the member is not adhering to these Rules of Conduct and Decorum.

k. The Mayor, and Committee reserve the right to answer questions and respond to comments. Again, members of the public are not permitted to ask questions of, or debate with, Committee unless permitted to do so by the Mayor.

l. Again, all remarks shall be addressed to the Committee as a body and not to any member thereof.