

New Jersey Pinelands Commission

Procedures for Public Comment during Commission and Committee Meetings

The Pinelands Commission and its staff appreciate the public's participation in the public comment portion of its meetings and thanks individuals in advance for conducting themselves in accordance with the procedures set forth below. These procedures are intended to provide orderly and efficient public comment, afford an opportunity for as many members of the public who wish to comment at the meeting to do so, ensure that the comments received are relevant to the Commission's legislative mandate, limit repetitive or redundant comment, and ensure there is an accurate record of the public comment offered. Additionally, these procedures and policies are intended to ensure that the Commission's meetings proceed without interruption. The Commission's chair or the Committee chair, as appropriate, may modify or supplement these rules as necessary to facilitate the orderly progress of the meeting.

1. **Registration for Public Comment.** Any individual may provide public comment concerning an agenda item, or in the case of the Commission's monthly meeting, matters that fall within the Commission's jurisdiction as established by the Pinelands Protection Act or delineated in the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan. Those wishing to provide public comment must "register" by signing the speaker list and providing the following information: 1) name and affiliation, and 2) the agenda item or, for the monthly Commission meeting, the matter within the Commission's jurisdiction, which he/she wishes to discuss. Registration will remain open throughout the public meeting.
2. **Speaker Sequence.** Commenters who have registered in advance of the meeting will be called in the following sequence:
 - 1) Comments on agenda items, in accordance with the order of items on the agenda and, then, based on the order of registration; and then
 - 2) Comments concerning matters generally within the Commission's jurisdiction, based on the order of registration.

The Commission or Committee chair may make exceptions to this sequence where he/she finds a different sequence would be helpful to the Commission's understanding of an issue or for other cause.

3. **Time Constraints.** The Commission or Committee Chair may establish time limitations for speakers based upon the number of individuals who wish to speak, the time available and the nature of the proceeding. Any time limit on the total comment period of the meeting or individual speakers will be announced by the Chair at the beginning of the meeting. When a commenter's time has expired, the commenter must stop speaking and leave the podium. Speakers are encouraged to prepare a written version of their comments so that, should they run out of time, their full comments may still be presented to the Commission.

4. **Questions.** As a general rule, the Commissioners and staff will not respond to public comments during a meeting. However, the Chair or a Commission member may ask a staff member to clarify an ambiguity, confirm facts or provide additional information.
5. **Record.** Commission and Committee meetings are recorded and such recordings are used for preparation of the meeting minutes. Commenters, once acknowledged by the Chair, shall approach the podium and begin their comments by clearly stating their name and affiliation or place of residence.
6. **Speaker and Audience Conduct.** Members of the public shall conduct themselves in a courteous manner at all times during a Commission or Committee meeting, including remaining quiet throughout the course of the meeting. Interrupting, heckling, disrupting in any way or using threatening or abusive language toward a Commissioner, staff member or other speaker is strictly prohibited. Likewise, loud comments of support, applause or other supportive demonstration for a speaker or his/her comments by the audience are also prohibited. Individuals who ignore these procedures or any other procedures established by the Commission or Committee Chair at the beginning of a meeting, including refusing to cease speaking after the allotted time has expired, will be asked to leave.
7. **Written Comments.** Written comments may be submitted in person during the meeting and at such other times as provided in a Commission public notice.
8. **News Media.** Members of the news media are required to check in with the Commission's Communication's Officer prior to the start of the meeting. Members of the press wishing to interview Commissioners or staff must make the request directly to the Communication Office. All interviews performed or recorded during the meeting will take place outside of the meeting room.
9. **Additional Procedure for Public Comment.** The Commission or Committee Chair retains the authority to terminate the public comment session for any reason including, among other things, failure of a speaker to respect the established time limits, adhere to any of the above procedures or any disrespectful, discourteous or unruly behavior by the audience.