

MEYERSDALE BOROUGH

OPEN PUBLIC COMMENT POLICY/VISITOR PARTICIPATION POLICY (REVISED 2/13/2024)

As a governmental body, the Borough Council has a variety of responsibilities and recognizes their responsibilities to obtain and the benefits to be received from public comments on matters pending before the Council. To provide an orderly and efficient manner to obtain public comment and to provide the public with an opportunity to participate in the meetings of the Borough, the Council hereby adopts the following policy for public comment.

I. OPEN PUBLIC COMMENT.

- A. So as to permit the Borough Council to complete their regular business in a timely fashion, an open public comment period not to exceed thirty (30) minutes shall be provided shortly after the opening of each advertised, regular Borough meeting. In the event that the open public comment period exceeds thirty (30) minutes, any member of the Borough Council may bring to the attention of the Council President that the time period has been exceeded and the time period may thereafter be extended only upon majority vote of the Borough Council members present.
- B. Public comment shall be primarily for residents of Meyersdale Borough, Somerset County, Pennsylvania. Non-residents shall be permitted to speak only if no residents are present or if there is additional time remaining during the public comment period. All persons addressing the Board must identify themselves and give their current residence address.
- C. So as to permit maximum public comment and input, no individual speaker shall be permitted to speak for more than five (5) minutes regardless of the topic and at no time may be transferred or assigned by others to the speakers so as to extend the five (5) minute time limit.
- D. It shall not be the normal practice of the Borough council to give responses or answers to issues or questions raised during the open public comment period, either by the Council members or by employees of the Borough. Any questions or issues raised will be referred to the appropriate individual for review and response. This provision shall not preclude the Council members from responding to questions requiring brief answers or information.
- E. In the event that persons shall wish to address the Borough Council requiring additional time beyond the thirty (30) minute open public comment period, the Council President or the Council member chairing the meeting in the absence of the Council President may either defer public comment until the end of the regular agenda for an additional public

comment period not to exceed sixty (60) minutes or may schedule a special or subsequent meeting for the purpose of obtaining additional public comment.

- F. Public comment may be stopped at the discretion of the Council President or the Council member chairing the meeting in the absence of the Council President, if defamatory or slanderous comments are made and additional comment by the speaker may be disallowed. Any member of Borough Council may request a vote of the Council to override the decision of the Council President or the Council member in charge, to permit additional comment by the speaker.

II. VISITOR PARTICIPATION – AGENDA.

- A. Any person or group wishing to appear before the Borough Council as a part of the regular agenda to present or discuss a major topic or issue shall deliver to the office of the Borough a written request to be placed on the agenda at least two (2) weeks (fourteen [14] days) prior to the scheduled meeting. Each such request for inclusion as a part of the agenda shall include the following:
 - 1. Name and address of person making the request.
 - 2. Organization or group, if any, represented.
 - 3. Content of information to be presented. If written material is to be passed out, a copy must accompany the request.
 - 4. Specific subject to be discussed or specific questions to be asked.
 - 5. If any information is to be presented that is in the form of statements or charges that might be considered derogatory, or of another serious nature, such must be presented in writing, specifically stating the charges and made in affidavit form.
- B. The Borough Council President shall respond in writing to any person or group making such an agenda item request, informing them as to the date of the meeting at which time the presentation may be made and the place assigned on the agenda. In the event that the agenda for the next ensuing meeting is unduly long, the Council President may, in the President's discretion, place the request for presentation at a subsequent meeting. In the event a question should arise in regard to granting such an agenda item request, the matter shall be referred to the entire Borough Council for decision. In no event shall any request be postponed for more than one (1) regular meeting.
- C. The Council President or his designee shall furnish a copy of such agenda request, verbatim, to each Council member with the agenda so that there will be ample time to study the matter.

- D. In the event that the subject matter of the agenda request shall appropriately involve an investigation or additional information, the Council President or his designee shall undertake to make such arrangements to obtain additional information and shall provide a written report of such information or recommendation sufficiently in advance of the meeting so the Council members shall have an ample opportunity to review the material.
- E. No person or group shall be allotted more than the thirty (30) minutes per subject on the agenda for any Borough meeting. A maximum of fifteen (15) minutes shall be allotted to the proponent of a subject or request, of which ten (10) minutes may be used for presentation and the remaining five (5) minutes for questions by the Borough Council members or Borough employees or consultants. Equal time shall be allocated an opponent, if any. If the item involves a group, a responsible party shall be appointed prior to the start of the discussion. If there is more than one speaker on each side of a question, it shall be the responsibility of the discussion leader for each group to divide the ten (10) minute period.

III. REGULAR AGENDA.

Discussion or proceedings of the Borough Council will not be interrupted by visitors during the course of the agenda. The President of the Borough Council or the Council member chairing the meeting in the absence of the Council President may, at his or her discretion, request information or comment from any visitor or person present at the meeting on an agenda item.

ADOPTED: February 13, 2024