

RULES OF CONDUCT OF THE PUBLIC AT PUBLIC MEETINGS  
CITY OF MARGATE

1. **INTENT**

The rules of conduct set forth herein shall apply to all public meetings held by boards, committees, and agencies of whatever nature or kind and established by the City Commission and it shall include the City Commission. Where the City Commission is referenced herein, it shall apply to each committee, board or agency.

2. **OVERVIEW**

Members of the public may speak at public meetings subject to the following:

a. **Public Recognition to Speak**

Unless otherwise provided by rule or by the presiding officer, members of the public may ask to be recognized to speak by walking up to the podium. Until the presiding officer opens the floor for public discussion, members of the public shall remain seated while the meeting is in session. The presiding officer will call upon the person to come to the podium to speak. The person shall then speak from the podium or by remote microphone or as otherwise indicated by the presiding officer.

b. **Seating in Chambers**

In the event that all available seats in the Chambers are filled, members of the public shall remain outside of the Chambers.

c. **Addressing the City Commission**

Members of the public may speak only at the times designated by the presiding officer. There should be no conversations amongst the audience members during the meeting. All questions from the public to the City Commission shall be addressed through the presiding officer and shall be addressed at the discretion of the presiding officer. The presiding officer may designate the City Manager to address questions. The normal practice shall be for the City Manager, at his/her discretion, to answer questions at the meeting or in a future manager's report or designate a staff person to follow up on questions or requests, and to avoid conversation between the public speaker and City Commission. All comments or remarks from a member of the public shall be addressed to the City Commission as a body through the presiding officer, and not to individual members of the City Commission, City staff or the audience. There shall be no cross conversation or questions of any other personal nature unless specifically permitted by the presiding officer. When addressing the presiding officer or referring to members of the City Commission or City staff, the speaker should use the person's proper title in order to contribute to a respectful, business-like atmosphere.

d. **Speaking Time**

The length of time each person may speak is limited in the interest of keeping order and conducting business at hand. Individuals will be limited to a single session three (3) minutes speaking time. The presiding officer may impose reasonable limitations on the total time allotted to the public participation on items and the total number of speakers during the discussion on any item. Further, the presiding officer may impose reasonable limitations on the time allotted to each speaker during discussion on any item.

e. **Speaker Recognition**

Members of the public recognized as speakers by the presiding officer shall state their name and address for the record.

**f. Topics of Discussion**

Members of the public shall address only the topic being discussed as determined by the presiding officer.

**g. Political Campaigning**

Speakers shall not make any political campaign statements for candidates, solicit for politically funded events or campaign related issues for candidates at any public meetings, nor make political campaign statements for or against any candidate. This shall not affect the right of any person to discuss political issues (not candidates) which specifically affect the City of Margate.

**h. Decorum**

No person shall disturb or interrupt any public meeting. No person shall interrupt any public meeting by speaking without being recognized by the presiding officer. No personal verbal attacks toward any individual by either a member of the City Commission, City staff, citizens or others shall be allowed during any meeting of the City Commission. To maintain decorum and order, no person shall use loud, offensive, disorderly, threatening, insulting, abusive, or foul language, or behave in an offensive, disorderly, threatening, abusive, or insulting manner, or make personal, impertinent, slanderous, or profane remarks as determined by the presiding officer to be intended as a disruption of the meeting.

**i. Violation of Rules**

Any member of the public who violates these rules may be instructed by the presiding officer to remove himself or herself from the Chambers where the public meeting is being conducted for the remainder of the meeting. It shall be unlawful for any person to refuse to leave the Chambers where the public meeting is being conducted when instructed to do so by the presiding officer. (City Code - Section 2-3 (b) It shall be unlawful and a violation of this Code for any person to violate the rules of conduct at public city meetings adopted by the City Commission.) The City Manager shall be instructed by the presiding officer to have the individual removed from the meeting by the Police Chief or his/her authorized agent in attendance at the meeting. Once removed, the individual shall be barred from the audience for the remainder of the meeting.

**j. Signs & Banners At Public Meetings**

In the interest of safety and to prevent the obstruction of view of all persons present at the public meetings, placards, banners, and other type of hand-held sign or similar object shall not be permitted in the Chambers where a public meeting is being conducted during public meetings by spectators or person seated in the audience.

**k. Recess & Adjournment**

The presiding officer may recess the meeting at his/her discretion. The presiding officer may adjourn the meeting unless overruled by a majority of the members present.

**l. Cell Phone Use**

During public meetings, all cell phones or other communication devices shall be turned off or set to silent mode. The only exception shall be that of Police and Fire Department employees.

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