

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 shall include the City Commission. Any reference to the City Commission shall also apply to each committee, board or agency.

2. OVERVIEW

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

a. Seating in Chambers

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

b. 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. Members of the public recognized as speakers shall state their name and address for the record. 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 for public discussion, thereby requesting the public 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.

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 among audience members during the meeting. All questions from the public to the City Commission shall be addressed through the presiding officer, and responded to at the discretion of the presiding officer. The presiding officer may designate the City Manager or City Attorney 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, professional and business-like atmosphere.

d. Public Discussion

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 of 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. Topics of Discussion

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

f. 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.

g. **Decorum**

No person shall disturb or interrupt any public meeting. No person shall interrupt any public meeting by speaking without first being recognized by the presiding officer. No personal, verbal attacks toward any individual by either a member of the City Commission, City staff, or members of the public 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. Nor shall anyone make personal, impertinent, slanderous, or profane remarks as determined by the presiding officer to be intended as a disruption of the meeting.

h. **Violation of Rules**

Any member of the public who violates these rules may be instructed by the presiding officer to leave the public 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.

i. **Signs & Banners at Public Meetings**

In the interest of safety and to prevent the obstruction of view of all persons present at public meetings, placards, banners, and other types of hand-held signs or similar objects **shall not** be permitted in the Chambers during public meetings by spectators or persons seated in the audience.

j. **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.

k. **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 to this requirement shall be that of Police and Fire Department employees.