

Adopted 4/1/08

Town of Salina
Rules for Decorum at Public Meetings

Town Board meetings are required to be held in public for the purpose of allowing the public to *observe* the meetings. The law does not require that town boards set aside time at regular town board meetings for public comment, except for the case of public hearings. Public participation is the purpose of a public hearing, which is required prior to the adoption of a local law or ordinance and in other cases, as specified by law.

The Town Board believes that a public comment period should be scheduled for each meeting. However, it believes that it is important that all periods of public input -- whether they be public hearings or a public comment period -- should abide by a set of rules that are designed to ensure that good order and civility is maintained at Town Board meetings. The purpose of the public comment period is to discuss Town business only. "Points of Order", questions, and comments before or after that period will not be recognized.

In an effort to help the Town conduct efficient and productive meetings, the Town of Salina, proposes the following policy on Rules of Decorum at Public Meetings:

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD/PUBLIC HEARING/PUBLIC INFORMATION
MEETING

1. The Town Board will set an item on each agenda for public comment. Except for the case of Public Hearings or special Public Information Meetings, the public comment portion of the meeting is the only time when comments will be permitted by the public.
2. The public comment period and public hearings and information meetings are designed for comments only. At the appropriate time, questions, comments and/or opinions will be taken by the Town Supervisor. Where appropriate, the Town Supervisor may direct the question, comment or opinion to the appropriate person to respond.
3. Each speaker must state his or her name and the subject he or she will be addressing.
4. Each speaker during the public comment period is limited to speak one time, five minutes in length, which rule will be enforced by the Town Supervisor. Any request of extension of this time limitation must be made to the Town Supervisor who has the discretion to extend the time to speak. In the case of public hearings, and at the discretion of the Town Supervisor, speakers may be allowed to speak a second time, once everyone has been allowed to speak once.
5. Comments by speakers must be addressed to the Town Supervisor. Attendees may not address the Town Board until recognized by the Town Supervisor.
6. Any audio/visual or similar equipment to be used to support the comments or issues of a speaker must be approved by the Town Supervisor at least 24 hours before the regularly scheduled meeting.

7. Discussion between speakers and attendees of the public meeting or hearing is prohibited. A speaker may disagree with or support prior speakers in comments directed to the Town Board.
8. Comments must be related to legitimate Town business.
9. Speakers should present their remarks in a courteous manner and may not make personal comments about public officials, town residents or others.
10. Placards, banners, or other signs are not permitted in meeting rooms, nor the distribution of flyers.
11. A person who disregards the directives of the Town Supervisor in enforcing the rules, disturbs the peace at the meeting, makes impertinent or slanderous remarks or generally conducts himself in a boisterous or inappropriate manner while addressing the Town Board, could be barred from further participation and forfeit any balance of time remaining for his comments.
12. If after a final warning, the speaker refuses to step down, the Town Supervisor will request that a Police Officer remove the individual from the meeting room. §240.20 of the Penal Law.

TOWN BOARD

1. Town Board members must be recognized by the Town Supervisor before making motions and speaking.
2. A member, once recognized, shall not be interrupted when speaking unless to call the member to order. If a member, while speaking, is called to order, such member shall cease speaking until the question of order is determined, and, if in order, such member shall be permitted to proceed.
3. There is no limit on the number of times a member may speak on a question.
4. A member may, with permission of the Town Supervisor, interrupt a speaker during their remarks, but only for the purpose of clarification and information.
5. All members shall observe the commonly accepted rules of courtesy, decorum, dignity and good taste.