

SKAMANIA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
PUBLIC COMMENT AND TESTIMONY POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to establish procedural guidelines that allow the citizens of Skamania County to have an opportunity to exercise their right to be involved in the democratic process and be heard by the Skamania County Board of Commissioners while maintaining order and decorum. The Board encourages, welcomes, and appreciates input from the public.

Purpose of Regular Meetings

The primary purpose of regular meetings is for the Board to conduct normal business deliberations and discussions. Per the [Washington State Open Public Meetings Act \(OPMA\), Chapter 42.30 RCW requirements](#), it is the only time where the Board may directly communicate with each other regarding County business.

Public Participation in Regular Meetings

The purpose of the public comment portion of a regular meeting is to allow attendees the opportunity to share their thoughts, concerns, and provide input to the Board about topics related to the County. The Board will not answer questions or engage in discussion during this time. Additionally, once the public comment portion has been closed by the Chair, no further public attendee participation is allowed. At the discretion of the Board, attendees who fail to comply with the conditions of this policy may be subject to forfeiture of their opportunity to provide public comment and may be requested to leave the boardroom if found disruptive.

Purpose of Public Hearings

The purpose of a public hearing is for the Board to obtain public input regarding specific, county-related topics before significant decisions are made.

Public Participation in Public Hearings

The purpose of the public testimony portion of the hearing is to allow the public the opportunity to share their thoughts, concerns, and provide input to the Board regarding the topic of the public hearing. The Board will not answer questions or engage in discussion during this time. Allowance of testimony unrelated to the topic of the hearing is at the discretion of the Chair and may not be accepted. Additionally, once the public testimony portion has been closed by the Chair, no further public attendee participation is allowed. At the discretion of the Board, attendees who fail to comply with the conditions of this policy may be subject to forfeiture of their opportunity to provide public testimony and may be requested to leave the boardroom if found disruptive.

Attendees should note the following to help ensure that comments and testimony are delivered in the most effective way:

Before the Meeting or Hearing

- All speakers should plan their speaking points prior to the meeting and make sure they are able to convey their message within the time allotted.
- It is best to practice speaking in a neutral and professional tone to help ensure a clear message.
- If an attendee would like to provide a more detailed comment or testimony in writing, they may bring four (4) hard copies for the Board. All written comments and testimony, including additional documents, must be handed to the Clerk of the Board for distribution.

During the Meeting or Hearing

- The Chair will announce when the public comment or testimony section of the meeting has opened. Each attendee wishing to speak must wait for the Chair to call on them before they may begin speaking. Attendees appearing remotely must remain muted until called upon. Though the Chair may ask the speaker to state their name and area of residence for the record, it is not required for any attendee to do so, and the speaker may choose to provide comment or testimony only.
- Typically, all speakers are offered up to three (3) minutes to share their thoughts and concerns. Under certain circumstances, such as time constraints, the time limit is subject to change at the discretion of the Chair. An attendee may not donate their unused speaking time to another attendee.
- Once the Chair has announced that the public comment or testimony section of the meeting or hearing has closed, no other public comment or testimony is allowed for the remainder of the meeting or hearing.
- No person may use public comment or testimony time for the purpose of campaigning or advertisement.
- Comments and testimony should be courteous, orderly, and respectful. An attendee should not name employees or make comments that might be interpreted as defamatory. If comments are disruptive or defamatory to any person, the Board may decide to stop an attendee's speaking time.
- If an attendee's comment or testimony pertains to a specific, non-elected county employee's job performance, the Board will direct them to schedule a personal meeting with a Commissioner or other elected official, as appropriate.
- The County will not re-publish any verbal or written comments or testimony.

Submitting Written Public Comment or Testimony

Any members of the public may submit a written public comment or testimony to the Clerk of the Board prior to the BOCC meeting or hearing for distribution to the Board via one of the following options:

1. E-mail: commiss@co.skamania.wa.us
Subject Line: Written Public Comment – [Meeting Date and Topic] ***OR***
Written Public Testimony – [Hearing Date and Topic]
Body of email: [Comment or Testimony]
[Full name and area of residence] (optional)
2. Mail 4 hard copies to: Skamania County Commissioners
Attn: Clerk of the Board
P.O. Box 790
Stevenson, WA 98648
3. Hand-deliver 4 copies to: Clerk of the Board
Skamania County Commissioners' Office
240 NW Vancouver Ave, Room 15
Stevenson, WA 98648

Written comments and testimony are accepted until 12:00 p.m. (noon) on the day before the meeting. If written comments and testimony are received after 12:00 p.m. (noon) the day before the meeting, they will be held for the following meeting. In order for written comments and testimony to be listed on the posted agenda, they need to be submitted by 12:00 p.m. (noon) on the Wednesday preceding the meeting. Written public comments and testimony will not be read into the record, posted in the online meeting

packet, or listed in the meeting minutes but are available to the public by request. All written public comments and testimony should be sent to the Clerk of the Board for distribution.

Public Comment/Testimony Questions and Records Requests

All questions regarding public comment and testimony should be directed to the Clerk of the Board. Requests for copies of written public comments and testimony may be directed to the Clerk of the Board to be forwarded to the County Public Records Officer for processing or may be requested through the [County Public Access Portal](#).

Individual Commissioner Meetings

Members of the public may submit a request to the Clerk of the Board to schedule a personal meeting with individual Commissioners. Please note, meetings are subject to the availability of the Board and this policy does not require any board member to meet personally or privately with any person.

Modification of Policy


The Skamania County Board of Commissioners reserves the right to modify the public comment policy as needed, subject to any applicable legal requirements or procedural requirements.

Notice of Disclosure

All verbal and written public comments and testimony, sign-up sheets, and all other materials provided by the public are considered public record and are subject to disclosure pursuant to [Washington State's Public Records Act, Chapter 42.56 RCW](#).

Adopted by the Skamania County Board of Commissioners on this 4th day of June, 2024.


Asa Leckie
Chair


Richard Mahar
Commissioner


T.W. Lannen
Commissioner