

## **CITY COMMISSION MEETING PROCEDURES, ADDRESSING THE CITY COMMISSION AND CODE OF CONDUCT FOR PUBLIC MEETINGS**

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to establish rules of decorum for members of the public attending, bringing signs or other objects to, and/or addressing the legislative or policy bodies at meetings held by the City of Mercedes, including meetings of the City Commission and City Boards, Commissions and Committees. The policy is intended to facilitate the conduct of public meetings in an open and orderly manner and in an environment safe for all persons in attendance.

### **SCOPE OF APPLICATION**

This policy applies to persons attending public meetings.

### **POLICY**

The Code of Conduct is intended to promote open meetings that welcome debate of public policy issues related to the governance of local government and City Boards, Commissions and Committees in an atmosphere of fairness, courtesy, and respect for differing points of view.

The maximum length of time for open forum is thirty (30) minutes with individual presentations limited to a maximum of three (3) minutes. In order to allow other residents to address the Commission, groups of three or more people wishing to discuss the same topic shall designate one person as the spokesperson. The City Attorney has the authority to call for point of order in every presentation to the City Commission.

The Police Chief or designee is designated as the Sergeant at Arms.

#### **1. Public Meeting Decorum:**

- a) Persons in the audience will refrain from behavior which will disrupt the public meeting. This will include making loud noises, clapping, shouting, booing, hissing or engaging in any other activity in a manner that disturbs, disrupts or impedes the orderly conduct of the meeting.
- b) Persons in the audience will refrain from creating, provoking or participating in any type of disturbance involving unwelcome physical contact. Persons in the audience will refrain from using cellular phones and/or pagers while the meeting is in session.
- c) Appropriate attire, including shoes and shirts are required in the Commission Chambers and Committee Rooms at all times.
- d) Persons in the audience will not place their feet on the seats in front of them.
- e) All persons entering the Commission Chambers and Committee Rooms, including their bags, purses, briefcases and similar belongings, may be subject to search for weapons and other dangerous materials.

#### **2. Signs, Objects or Symbolic Material:**

Objects and symbolic materials, such as signs or banners, are NOT allowed in the Commission Room. Objects that are deemed a threat to persons at the meeting or the facility infrastructure are not allowed. City staff is authorized to remove items and/or individuals from the Commission Chambers and Committee Rooms if a threat exists or is perceived to exist. Prohibited items include, but are not limited to: firearms (including replicas and antiques), toy guns, explosive material, and ammunition; knives and other edged weapons; illegal drugs and drug paraphernalia; laser pointers, scissors, razors, scalpels, box cutting knives, and other cutting tools; letter openers, corkscrews, can openers with points, knitting needles, and hooks; hairspray, pepper spray, and aerosol containers; tools; glass containers; and large backpacks and suitcases that contain items unrelated to the meeting.

#### **3. Addressing the Commission/Committee:**

- a) Persons wishing to address the Commission/Committee on a Public Hearing, must raise their hand when the Mayor asks for citizen comments and the Mayor will recognize them.
- b) Persons who are able, must make their comments from the microphone at the front of the room. Persons unable to do so, may address the Commission/Committee from their seat; however, must speak loudly so that the Commission/Committee can hear.
- c) Persons must provide their name and address at the beginning of the remarks for the formal record.
- d) Meeting attendees are given three (3) minutes to speak during open forum and may only speak once during the open forum. The time limit is at the discretion of the Mayor and may be limited when appropriate. Applicants and appellants in land use matters may be given more time to speak.
- e) Speakers must discuss topics related to City business.
- f) Speakers' comments should be addressed to the full body. Requests to engage the Mayor, Commissioners, Board or Committee Members, or Staff in conversation will not be honored. Abusive language will not be tolerated.
- g) Speakers will not bring to the podium any items other than a prepared written statement, writing materials, or objects that are relevant to the presentation.
- h) If an individual wishes to submit written information, he or she may give it to the City Secretary or City Manager at the meeting.
- i) Speakers and any other members of the public will not approach the dais at any time without prior consent from the Mayor or Chair of the meeting.
- j) No member participating in the open forum shall insult the honesty and/or integrity of the City Commission, staff, or general public. Accordingly, profane, insulting or threatening language, and/or racial slurs, ethnic, religious, or gender slurs/epithets will not be tolerated.
- k) No one will be able to sign up once the meeting has commenced.

**Failure to comply with this Code of Conduct which will disturb, disrupt or impede the orderly conduct of the meeting may result in removal from the meeting and/or possible arrest.**