



MEEKER COUNTY BOARD PROTOCOL AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION POLICIES

COUNTY BOARD MEETINGS

The Meeker County Board of Commissioners holds regular business meetings on the first and third Tuesdays of each month and a work session on the fourth Tuesday of each month. The Board may also call Special Meetings to address specific topics or Emergency Meetings to handle matters that cannot wait until the next regularly scheduled Board meeting. The County Board may also appoint committees to address specific issues and recommend action to the full County Board. No formal action or final decisions can be made at work sessions or committee meetings. Typically, the County Board will meet in the County Board Room located on the second floor of the Meeker County Government Center, 114 N. Holcombe Avenue, Litchfield. The meetings are held at 8:30 a.m. and completed at the closure of County business on the designated agenda.

County business, at certain periods during the year, may make it necessary to recess a meeting to a future date. There are also instances where a special meeting must be called to consider certain specified actions. In both cases, the public will be informed of such meetings through media outlets and the County's website, pursuant to the requirements of the Open Meeting Law (MN Stat. 13D). All meetings of the full County Board are open to the public, unless closed for specific purposes as allowed by the Minnesota Open Meeting Law. The public is encouraged to attend County Board meetings to learn about County business.

Regular County Board meetings are recorded and broadcasted on the County's YouTube page as a courtesy to the public that cannot attend the meetings in-person, unless a technical issue prevents the recording or broadcast. A link to the page is published on the County Board agenda. There is no requirement for the County Board to broadcast the meetings. Work sessions and committee meetings are not recorded or broadcasted. These recordings are not the official record of the meeting, the adopted minutes shall serve as the official record.

Commissioners may, from time to time, participate in public meetings via interactive technology (MN Stat. 13D.02). It is the policy of the County Board that unless a member is not physically present due to medical restrictions or a family emergency, as determined by the County Board Chair in consultation with the County Attorney, that they shall not be counted toward a quorum and MN Stat. 13D.02 will not apply.

RULES OF CONDUCT

The Meeker County Board Chair has the responsibility of providing leadership in convening and managing all official meetings of the County Board. In this capacity, the Chair facilitates discussion and action Board agenda items, ensures that the meeting protocol is adhered to, and that the laws and statutes requiring adherence to Minnesota Government Data Practices Act and Open Meeting Laws are not violated. In the absence of the Chair, the Vice-Chair assumes this role.

The Rules of Parliamentary Procedure embodied in Robert's Rules of Order shall guide the Board in all cases applicable, except as modified by the rules herein and applicable Minnesota Statutes. In all cases, except where Minnesota Statutes dictate, a majority vote of the whole Board will prevail when deciding a question (i.e. 3 out of 5). While Robert's Rules of Order shall guide the actions of the County Board, it need not be strictly enforced. The County Board maintains norms of operation that are outside of the requirements of Robert's Rules of Order and as such, the County Board Chair may, at their discretion, allow for variations from Robert's Rules of Order.

During meetings, Commissioners and the public are reminded that debate should remain respectful, focusing on issues rather than individuals. Discussion should remain focused on the topic on the agenda and as much as possible, repetitive comments should be held to a minimum during the same discussion. Following the conclusion of a discussion and final disposition of an issue, Commissioners should seek to publicly support the decision of the whole, even if they voted against the prevailing motion. The Board Chair maintains the right to recess a meeting at any time.

All cellular phones shall be silenced or turned off while in the County Board room, whether prior to or during the meeting. If an individual present in the Board room receives a call, the person shall avoid answering their phone in the Board room, but shall take the call outside in the lobby area to avoid disrupting the County Board meeting.. Any person in violation of this policy may be asked to leave or be removed from the County Board room. Additionally, individuals participating in the meeting, should refrain from use of their cell phone or other electronic devices, unless use is necessary for the meeting.

No person(s) shall be allowed to behave with outbursts or inappropriate or offensive conduct at any time while in the Board room. The purpose of this policy is to allow appropriate public comments through formal or informal processes and to avoid interference and/or inappropriate conduct while the County Board is conducting business. Proper conduct will be expected at all times prior to, during, and after Board meetings. Any person in violation of this protocol may be asked to leave or be removed from the Board room.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION RULES AND PROCEDURES

There is no statutory requirement that the County Board provide a public comment period; however, the Board of Commissioners desires public participation at its meetings, but also has the responsibility for conducting its business in an orderly fashion. Members of the audience are encouraged to be heard, which shall occur prior to the Board's scheduled agenda items during the public comment period. Participants shall sit at the presenter's table in front of the Commissioners. The participant shall identify themselves and the issue they are addressing or wishing to raise by speaking into the microphone so as to be heard clearly. The individuals will be allowed **three minutes** for their presentation. When there are a large number of speakers to be heard, the Board Chair may shorten this time. Members of the public may submit written comments in advance of a meeting to the County Administrator's Office, which will be read during the public comment period. The Board Chair has discretion to allow additional public comment regarding items on the agenda, during the discussion of that item.

Repetitive comments from public participants are discouraged. Outbursts, or other inappropriate conduct shall not be allowed during this period. Interruption or other interference with the orderly conduct of the Board of Commissioners meeting will not be tolerated. Defamatory or

abusive remarks are always out of order. The Board Chair may terminate the speaker's privilege if they persist in improper conduct of remarks.

At a public meeting of the Board, no person shall orally initiate charges or complaints against individual employees of the County (due to laws governing Data Practices) or debate subject under jurisdiction of the Courts. All such charges, if presented to the Board directly, shall be referred to the County Administrator's and County Attorney's Offices for investigation and report.

No action shall occur by the County Board, after the informal public comment period is over unless a County Board member seeks to ask a clarification question. Additionally, the Commissioners are not required to respond to the comments provided because the purpose of this period is for the Commissioners to listen to participants respectfully express their views.

AGENDA PREPARATION AND DISTRIBUTION

The County Administrator shall prepare the agenda and supporting material for each regular, special, and emergency meeting, as well as all work sessions. It is encouraged that Department Heads shall submit their materials to the County Administrator five business days in advance of the meeting for review and approval for inclusion on the agenda. Individual Commissioners may request to have items included on the agenda by informing the County Administrator five business days in advance of the meeting. The County Board Chair holds authority for establishment of the agenda and may instruct the County Administrator as to whether or not an item should be included on agenda. The full County Board may overrule the Chair by a majority vote. The final agenda is approved by the County Board at the start of each meeting.

Members of the public may request to have items added to an agenda by contacting the County Administrator's Office at least five business days prior to the scheduled meeting. The request should include the name, address, and telephone number of the person(s) making the request, a statement describing the action the applicant(s) requests the Board to take, and the background information outlining the reasons for the request. It will be discretion of the Board Chair following the Guidelines for Requested Resolutions and Proclamations, whether or not to include the item on the agenda. The full County Board may overrule the Chair by a majority vote.

The Board's agenda packet, including the meeting agenda and supporting material, shall be posted on the County's website and a link e-mailed out to all of the Commissioners by the Thursday preceding the scheduled meeting, unless otherwise noticed. Copies of the agenda and supporting material shall be made available to staff, the public, and the media as appropriate and required by statute. A distribution list shall be maintained by the County Administrator's Office.

The consent agenda consists of routine, non-controversial actions and motions that can be grouped together and handled in one motion of the Board. The consent agenda items shall be considered as one item of business and in the minutes, the actions included in the consent agenda shall be individually recorded. Examples of items that are included on the consent agenda include minutes, warrants, budgeted contracts under \$100,000, grant agreements, agreement renewals, and final payment of contracts when within budget. Consent agenda items are not discussed individually, with the exception of brief clarifying questions. If, at the Board meeting, any Commissioner so requests, an item shall be removed from the consent agenda and considered separately.

COUNTY BOARD OFFICER ELECTIONS

Per MN Statute 375.13, "The County Board, at its first session in each year, shall elect from its members a chair and vice-chair." The Chair presides at the County board meetings, decides of questions of order, and signs all documents requiring signature of the County Board. The Chair's signature, attested by the County Administrator (or designee), is binding as the signature of the County Board. The Vice-Chair performs the duties of the Chair when the Chair is unable to perform those duties. If the Chair and Vice-Chair are absent from any meeting, the members shall choose from among themselves a temporary Chair and all documents requiring the signature of the Board shall be signed by a majority of it and attested by the County Administrator.

The first session of each year shall be presided by the County Attorney until a Chair is elected. The process to open nominations for Chair and Vice-Chair shall be as follows:

1. Open the floor for nominations
 - a. Recognition by the Chair is not required to make a nomination
 - b. After each nomination, the Chair repeats the name of the nominee to the Commissioners
 - c. Nominations do not need to be seconded, but it is not out of order for a nomination to be seconded
 - d. A person may nominate themselves
 - e. A Commissioner may decline the nomination
2. Close the nominations
 - a. The Chair shall call for further nominations three times
 - b. A motion to close is not necessary as the nomination process continues until no one wishes to make further nominations
 - c. Upon no further nominations, the Chair shall declare nominations closed
3. Vote on nominations
 - a. Nominations are decided by a majority vote
 - b. Voting on each nominee is conducted in the order in which they were nominated
 - c. Voting shall continue until a nominee receives a majority vote
 - d. If there is a tie or no one receives a majority vote, members keep voting until someone is elected

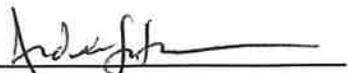
Following election of the Chair, the newly elected Chair shall preside over the meeting and conduct the nomination and election of the Vice-Chair.

During the County Board's first session of the year, and at other times as necessary, the County Board shall appoint from among itself members to participate on various committees, organizations, and groups. While participation on these committees typically occurs on a volunteer basis, if more Commissioners desire to serve than there are seats available, a majority vote of the County Board shall determine who serves on the committee, organization, or group.

POLICY ADOPTION

This policy shall be reviewed adopted by the County Board on an annual basis, via resolution, at the first session of each year.

Approved on: 1-6-2020

Attest: 
Andrew Letson, County Administrator

