

WHEATON TOWN BOARD MEETING

WHEREAS, the WISCONSIN OPEN MEETING LAWS gives members of the public the right to attend meetings of public bodies but does not give the public the right to speak or otherwise participate at those meetings, except at public hearings and under other limited circumstances, and;

WHEREAS, the WISCONSIN TOWN LAWS authorizes a town board to enact rules and regulations regarding the conduct of public meetings and public hearings conducted by the town board, and the WISCONSIN LAWS agree that a public body can adopt reasonable rules that treat members of the public equally, and;

WHEREAS, that any such rules could serve as a basis for preventing verbal interruptions, shouting or other outbursts, as well as slanderous or obscene language or signs, and that a town board can regulate actions of its members and of the public attending meetings so as not to interfere with meetings or prevent others in attendance from observing or hearing the deliberative process, and;

WHEREAS, a town board has a responsibility to insure that everyone has the right to participate in a public hearing and therefore can reasonably limit the length and general nature of public comments to the subject of the public hearing and to limit the expression of facts and opinions to one occurrence of such facts or opinions, so as not to go over and over the same things, so that a town board can consider various points of view, and

WHEREAS, a town board can limit other comments from the public at town board meetings to a specific time set in the agenda for public participation and comment, and

WHEREAS, the Town Board finds that public input during the agenda portions of the meeting can many times aid in making realistic decisions for the Township, at the discretion of the Town board and Town Chair.

NOW, therefore, be it resolved by the Town Board of the TOWN of WHEATON hereby adopts the following rules for public participation AND Town Supervisor decorum at meetings of the Town Board:

1. Except for public hearings as required by the Laws of the State of Wisconsin, public participation at meetings of the Town Board shall be limited to the public participation segment of the agenda of Town Board meetings, and such portions where public input is requested from the Town Supervisors, and,

2. Public comment, whether during the public participation segment of the Town Board meeting or during a duly designated public hearing, shall be limited to five minutes per person. An individual's time may not be given or traded to other speakers or reserved for other portions of the meeting.

3. Any person wishing to speak at a public meeting during the public participation segment or during a public hearing must sign in upon entering the room, when such sign-in sheet is available, indicating his or her intention to speak, which sheet will be used by the Town Chair to recognize speakers.

4. Any individual wishing to speak during the public participation segment or during a public hearing; when a sign-in sheet is not available, shall raise his or her hand, When recognized by the Town Chair, the individual must stand and state his or her name and, if appropriate, group affiliation and must state the subject he or she will be addressing.

5. Comments must relate to the purpose of the public hearing or to legitimate town business.

6. The Town Chair shall act as timekeeper or shall designate another elected official as timekeeper.

7. Members of the Town Board, speakers and audience members must observe proper decorum. Any statements made during the meeting or during a public hearing by the Supervisors, town officials or employees, or members of the general public shall not involve personal, impertinent, or slanderous attacks on individuals, regardless of whether the individual so attacked is an elected official, a town official or employee, or a member of the general public.

8. The Town Chair shall control the meeting. The use of profane, vulgar, inflammatory, threatening, abusive, or disparaging language or racial or ethnic slurs directed at the Supervisor, members of the Town Board, town officials or employees and members of the general public, shall not be tolerated.

9. It is inappropriate to utilize a public meeting for the purpose of making political speeches, including threats of political action, and the same will not be allowed.

10. Comments by speakers must be addressed to the Town Board. Attendees may not address the Town Board unless recognized by the Town Chair.

11. Discussion between speakers and attendees of the public meeting or hearing are prohibited. A speaker may disagree with or support prior speakers in comments directed to the Town Board. Re-statement of comments is not allowed.

12. Banners, flyers or other signs are not permitted in the meeting room; distribution of flyers in the meeting room is also prohibited.

13. Any person who disregards the directives of the Town Chair in enforcing the rules or who generally conducts himself or herself in a boisterous or inappropriate manner while the meeting is in session disturbs the peace at a meeting and will be declared out of order. Continued action out of order subjects the violator to removal from the meeting, per State Law.

14. The above rules shall take effect at the next meeting of the Town Board after the adoption of these rules.