

## Policy 2: Procedures for Public Comment

1. All meetings of the Oconee County Board of Elections and Registration shall be open to the public; however, the Board reserves the right to meet in executive session in accordance with Board Policy and the Georgia Open Meetings Act (*O.C.G.A. § 50-14-1 et seq.*).
2. The Board desires citizens of the county to attend its meetings so they may be better informed. Fifteen minutes will be allotted for the public to comment when the Board meets for its regularly scheduled meetings. Time for public comments will not be allotted at any other meeting of the Board. Any questions or concerns may also be submitted in writing to the Elections Director. The Director will share the questions or concerns with the Board.
3. It is the intent of the Board to allow public comment in a limited public forum; therefore, only public comments on issues reasonably related to the powers and jurisdiction of the Board are allowed.
4. To allow everyone who wishes to appear before the Board to be heard, the following shall be adhered to:
  - a. Those wishing to make public comment must sign up at the door before the start of the regularly scheduled Board meeting. Each person signing up to speak must verify that they have reviewed this Policy, list their address and that they are either a citizen of Oconee County or a business owner of a business in Oconee County. The sign-up sheet will be collected at the designated meeting start time, and the Chair will call on each qualified speaker in order during the public comment portion of the agenda. Speakers addressing the same topic are encouraged to designate one speaker to allow more speakers the opportunity to provide public comment.
  - b. Only residents of Oconee County or Oconee County business owners may make public comments under this Policy. Candidates for public office, at the time of qualification until after the date of the election, may not address the Board during the public comment period.
  - c. Political speeches or speeches on behalf of individuals who are on the ballot will not be permitted during the public comments period. Each speaker's comments shall be limited to three (3) minutes with a total public comment time of 15 minutes. The Board Chair or other individual designated by the Chair shall keep the time of each speaker. Each speaker shall begin their comments by stating their name, address, and any group they are representing.

- d. All public comments shall be directed to the Board as a body and not to an individual member or Election Office staff member, poll worker, etc. The Board or the Elections Director may ask questions for clarification but not engage in discussion with the speaker.
- 5. The Board Chair or other presiding officer has the authority to regulate orderly conduct at the meetings. This includes reminding any speaker of the provisions of this Policy and to terminate the remarks of any individual who does not adhere to the rules established in this policy. Any Board member in disagreement with the Chair's decision may call for a vote on such termination and the results of the vote shall determine the issue. Continued violations may result in a party being removed from the meeting.
- 6. Any board member or Elections Office staff may address public comments via email or in remarks at a future meeting; however, neither the Board nor Election Office staff are obligated to respond to any public comments made during regularly scheduled meetings.
- 7. This Policy shall be made available to the public at each meeting and posted on the Board's website.

**Approved**