



## Jackson Parish Police Jury

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### Public Comments Policy

Adopted by the Jackson Parish Police Jury effective 10/14/2019

**PURPOSE:** The Jackson Parish Police Jury (herein referred to as “Police Jury”) recognizes the importance of receiving comments from the public with the purpose being to provide an opportunity for them to express their views, comments, or opinions to the Police Jury members. It is a time for the Police Jury to listen to the public. The following policy has been established to maintain order and decorum during the public comment period. Furthermore, these guidelines are designed to ensure fairness to each speaker by establishing rules in advance that will be applied equally to each speaker.

**SCOPE:** This policy applies to all persons, including Police Jurors, Police Jury staff, and the general public in attendance of a public meeting called by the Police Jury.

**POLICY STATEMENT:** Pursuant to Louisiana R.S. 42:14 (D), the Police Jury is required to allow a public comment period prior to action on an agenda item upon which a vote is to be taken. Under the same revised statute, the Police Jury also has the authority to adopt reasonable rules and restrictions regarding such comment period.

### GUIDELINES

The public comment period shall be reserved as an item of business on the agenda for all meetings of the Police Jury which are subject to the notice requirements of Louisiana R.S. 42:19 (A). All comments to the Police Jury during the public comment period shall be subject to the following guidelines:

1. Prior to the start of the public comment period, persons wishing to address the Police Jury will register on a sign-up sheet stationed by the meeting room entrance. Prior to beginning the public comment period, the Secretary-Treasurer, or designated staff member, will collect the sign-up sheet and recognize the speakers in the order that they registered. Speakers will address the Police Jury from the podium or other designated area. Special accommodations will be made for persons with a disability or for those with special needs (example: translator) with appropriate advanced notice to the Police Jury Secretary-Treasurer. Speakers will be asked to identify themselves for the record.
2. Each speaker shall be limited to a maximum time of two (2) minutes. Each speaker will only be allowed to speak once during the public comment period. The Secretary-Treasurer shall serve as timekeeper and the Police Jury President will promptly announce when the speaker’s time has expired.
3. Speakers may speak on any topic related to the jurisdiction of the Police Jury in Jackson Parish *unless* it is a topic for which a public hearing is being held on the same meeting agenda. This is for efficiency and to avoid redundancy as these items have a designated public comments section during the hearing.



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4. No time may be yielded or transferred from one speaker to another. Each speaker will be concise and avoid repetition. In order to avoid repetition and delay, groups of people supporting the same position are encouraged to designate a spokesperson for the group.
5. The public comment period is not intended to require the Police Jury and/or any staff to answer any impromptu questions. Police Jurors may ask a speaker to clarify information in order to better understand the speaker's comments. The Police Jury will not take action on an item presented during the public comment period. Upon completion of the public comment period and when appropriate, the Police Jury may summarize the comments heard from citizens and the Police Jury may refer inquires made during the public comment period to their designated staff member(s) to address as appropriate. If necessary, the item may be added to the agenda of a future meeting, thereby providing the staff an opportunity to research the item and provide data to the Police Jury for consideration and review.
6. Speakers will address comments to the entire Police Jury as a whole and not one individual member. Discussions between speakers and members of the audience will not be permitted during the public comment period.
7. Speakers who have prepared written remarks are encouraged to leave a copy of such remarks with the Police Jury Secretary-Treasurer. Speakers who have materials that they want distributed to the Police Jury related to the item they plan to discuss during the public comment period, shall provide nine (9) copies of those documents to the Secretary-Treasurer prior to the start of the meeting. The Secretary-Treasurer shall distribute the copies to the Police Jury, Attorney, and retain one copy for the record.
8. Speakers shall be civil and courteous in their language and presentation. Profanity, vulgar language, inappropriate gestures, hate speech, insults, personal attacks, accusations, defamation to a person, people, or organization, or other inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated. It is the desire of the Police Jury to conduct the business of the parish in an environment that is open and available to the public while maintaining decorum and a professional atmosphere.
9. In order to provide for the maintenance of order and decorum in the conduct of the meeting, the Police Jury President may declare "out-of-order" any person who fails to comply with this policy. The Police Jury President shall caution any such person to abide by the provisions of this policy. Those found to be *substantially* interfering with the Police Jury's ability to conduct business and engaging in disorderly conduct may be removed from the meeting.



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10. Upon unanimous approval of the Police Jury members present at a meeting, they may take up a matter not on the agenda. Any such matter shall be identified in the motion to amend the agenda with reasonable specificity, including the purpose for the addition to the agenda, and entered into the minutes of the meeting. Prior to any vote on the motion to take up a matter not on the agenda by the Police Jury, there shall be an opportunity for public comment on any such motion in accordance with R.S. 42:14 or 15
11. Employees of the Police Jury are allowed to speak during the public comments section without fear of retaliation or an expectation of preferential treatment. They will be treated as a member of the general public and will adhere to all other guidelines defined in this policy.
12. Police Jurors who are present at an open meeting count towards the quorum required to call a meeting and therefore cannot participate as a member of the public to address the Police Jury during the public comments section. Whether a Juror is sitting with the rest of the Police Jury, standing or sitting with the audience, or announcing that they aren't present as an official, they will remain an official member of the board as duly elected at all times during a Police Jury meeting.
13. Speakers are hereby notified that any public comments, distributed materials, etc. that is shared with the Police Jury or staff will become part of the public record and is thereby subject to Louisiana Public Records Law in accordance with Louisiana R.S. 44:1-44:41.