

BOROUGH OF AMBLER
PUBLIC COUNCIL MEETING ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION POLICY

I. INTENT

It is the intent of this policy to 1) provide a reasonable opportunity for public attendance and participation at public meetings of the Borough Council, Borough Authority, and all other publicly held meetings of the Borough's Boards and other Committees; 2) promote orderly and efficient public meetings of Borough Council and all other Boards; and 3) otherwise comply with the provisions of the Sunshine Act, 65 P.S. §701 et seq.

All references to Council President/Chairperson shall include another designated member of Council/Board, in the event of the President's absence.

II. ATTENDANCE AND NOTICE

Residents, Tenants, Business Owners and Lessees are welcomed and encouraged to attend all public meetings of the Borough Council.

The term 'Residents' is defined as all those who are domiciled within the limits of the Borough of Ambler.

The term "Residents/taxpayers" is used in this document to indicate the broader group of Residents, Tenants, Business Owners and Lessees.

Notice of all public meetings will be provided in compliance with the provisions of the Sunshine Act.

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

A. Guidelines for Public Comment

1. Recognition

- Residents/taxpayers who wish to comment should come to, or line up at, the podium after the applicable public comment period has been announced.
- Council President/Chair will then recognize by signal or name that a resident wishing to comment may begin to do so.
- Speakers must state their name and address clearly for the record.

2. Time

Public comment shall not exceed three (3) minutes per person per agenda item. Council President/Chair shall have the discretion to permit a resident to continue commenting for an additional period not to exceed two (2) minutes, after taking into consideration the number of agenda items, the number of residents wishing to comment, the complexity of the item, the duplicative or original nature of the comments being provided, the reasonable length of the meeting, and any other factors relevant to the orderly and efficient conduct of the meeting.

3. Show of hands in lieu of speaking

Should a number of attendees be present for a particular issue, Council President may ask for a show of hands for residents/taxpayers who agree with a particular speaker's comments on the issue. This allows residents to express their opinions even if they do not want to come speak at the podium.

4. Submission of comments in writing

Each person wishing to comment may put their remark in writing and submit to the Council President prior to the start of the meeting. After the meeting has commenced, upon being recognized, the person commenting shall provide their name, address and group affiliation (if applicable) before addressing Council/Board.

Persons wishing to provide written comment or information should bring at least ten (10) copies, one for each Councilperson, one each for the Borough Manager and Borough Solicitor, and one for the record. Additionally, comments may be submitted in advance of the meeting for the Borough Manager's attention via the Borough's website.

5. Expectations of conduct

Public comments are both welcomed and encouraged during meetings. All participants are expected to deliver comments in a respectful and peaceful manner. Foul language, aggression, or inappropriate behavior will lead to removal from the meeting. Please note that the designated public comment periods are intended solely for comments. These sessions are not intended as question-and-answer periods unless otherwise initiated by the President/Chair, Solicitor or Borough Manager.

B. Public Comment on Agenda Items

Council will provide reasonable, structured opportunities for residents to comment on agenda items and on items not on the agenda. Comment periods are structured differently for Committee and Council meetings.

1. Business meetings

Public comment is welcome after the committee discussion of agenda items. This allows committee deliberation to be informed by public comment and also allows the public to comment after each committee's discussion to comment on the deliberation and recommendations.

If votes are required at a committee meeting, the proposed vote will be on the Committee's agenda, and public comment is welcome before the Committee's deliberation.

Since speakers may choose to provide public comment after each committee's report, each instance shall be subject to the 3-minute limit.

2. Council meetings

Public comment is welcome before the committees begin their agendas. This allows all committee deliberation and decisions to be informed by public comment.

Since speakers provide public comment before deliberation, that instance shall be subject to the 3-minute limit even if multiple agenda items are addressed by the speaker.

C. Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items

Council/Board will provide a reasonable opportunity for residents to comment on any non-agenda items after all agenda items have been addressed, but prior to the adjournment of the public meeting.

IV. Modifications to Policy

This policy may be modified at any time by act of Council.