
PUBLIC INPUT AND MEETING CONDUCT

1. PURPOSE

To establish the framework and guiding principles to govern the public input processes during a Council or Committee of the Whole meeting, to ensure they are conducted in a fair and equitable manner, and accessible to everyone.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to North Cowichan Council and the public who wish to share their ideas and opinions with Council at a Council or Committee of the Whole meeting, during Public Input and Question Period.

3. POLICY

3.1. Public Participation and Conduct

Council is committed to fostering a safe, respectful, and orderly environment for the public to observe, and where permitted participate in the decision-making process.

Public participation will be conducted in a manner that is:

- (a) Respectful, by treating Council, staff, and other members of the public with respect, courtesy, fairness, and equality.
- (b) Considerate, by refraining from talking on phones or having loud discussions, booing, or clapping whether in favour or against matters, or any other disruptive behaviour that would impede the proceedings or inhibit free speech. Inappropriate/abusive language, outbursts or criticisms aimed at individuals or groups will not be permitted.
- (c) Compliant with directives from the Mayor, in a prompt and orderly fashion.
- (d) Equitable, by ensuring people who choose to participate in person, by phone, or by electronic means, are provided the opportunity to address Council.

Citizens are reminded that their comments are captured in the video recording (public record) and that proper decorum is mandated. Anyone wishing to address Council or the Committee of the Whole, when participating from Council Chambers, should be positioned to face Council and not members of the gallery.

3.2. Public Input Opportunity

The Public Input period is an opportunity for a person to share their thoughts on agenda items so that Council can better understand the public's interests, values, and perspectives. Each person wishing to address Council or the Committee of the Whole during Public Input must register prior to the start of the meeting.

There are three options to speak at a Council or Committee of the Whole meeting; in person, by phone, or electronically. To provide an equal opportunity to speak to Council, anyone wishing to address Council:

- ***in person*** from Council Chambers, must register at least 10 minutes and not more than 30 minutes before the meeting, using the sign-up sheet or the webform available outside of Council Chambers [whichever method is being provided].
- ***by phone***, must register at least 10 minutes and not more than 30 minutes before the meeting, using the webform available on North Cowichan's website www.northcowichan.ca.
- ***electronically***, must register at least 10 minutes and not more than 30 minutes before the meeting, by signing up using the webform available on North Cowichan's website www.northcowichan.ca.

Any registrations submitted earlier than 30 minutes prior to the meeting will not be accepted.

When invited by the Mayor, and subject to the limits established in the Council and Committee Procedures Bylaw No. 3945, 2024, each speaker:

- (a) Must first state their name and residential address.
- (b) Must restrict their remarks to matters on the agenda.
- (c) Must address their remarks through the Mayor.
- (d) Must not talk about matters from a closed meeting.
- (e) May not assign their time to another speaker, however, speakers who require accommodations for a speech-related disability or who require language interpretation services may be allotted additional time by the Mayor.
- (f) Shall present their comments in a polite, calm, and courteous manner using respectful language, civility and decorum.
- (g) If a person is representing an organization or group, the person is requested to indicate whether their comments represent the official view of the organization or group.

To promote an equal opportunity to speak to Council, no person who has already addressed Council shall be permitted to do so a second time if another person who has not spoken wishes to do so. Should there be sufficient time for a second question, those wishing to speak again, shall only do so with additional or new information.

Council members shall not comment or answer questions in response to issues raised during Public Input. Comments will be curtailed by the Mayor once the speaker exceeds the time limits. Upon closing of the Public Input period, further public comments will not be heard.

3.3. Question Period Opportunity

The Question Period is an opportunity to ask questions regarding matters discussed at a Council or the Committee of the Whole meeting. There are three options to participate in Question Period: in person, by phone, or electronically. The Mayor will call for questions from Council Chambers first and will then call for questions from those participating by phone and electronically.

When invited by the Mayor, and subject to the speaking limitations established in the Council and Committee Procedures Bylaw No. 3945, 2024, each speaker must:

- (a) Begin by stating their name and residential address.
- (b) Direct their questions to the Mayor.
- (c) Be concise and avoid repeating previous questions.
- (d) Conduct themselves in a civil and respectful manner.
- (e) Restrict questions to matters on the agenda.
- (f) Restrict questions to the appropriate time on the agenda.

3.4. Failure to Follow Rules

Refusal to follow these rules may result in removal from the meeting.

RELATED POLICIES & PROCEDURES

- Council and Committee Procedures Bylaw No. 3945, 2024
- Agendas and Minutes Policy
- Delegations and Presenters Policy
- Public Hearing Procedures Policy
- Standards of Conduct Policy
- Respectful Spaces Bylaw No. 3796, 2020

APPROVAL HISTORY

WRITTEN BY: Mark O. Rattan, Director of Administration	APPROVED BY: Council	DATE: April 4, 2012
	AMENDED BY: Council	DATE: February 4, 2015
REWRITTEN BY: Tricia Mayea, Manager, Legislative Services	REPLACED BY: Council	DATE: October 2, 2024