2023

RULES OF PROCEDURE, CONDUCT AND DECORUM AT MEETINGS OF THE MASON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT

I. All Regular, Special, Emergency and Executive Session Meetings of the MASON County Commissioners Court will be called and conducted in accordance with the provisions of the Texas Open Meetings Act, Chapter 551, Government Code.

II. Regular, Special, and Emergency Meetings of the MASON County Commissioners Court are open to the public and to representatives of the press and media. Executive Sessions of the Commissioners Court are not open to the public, the press, or the media and only those individuals expressly requested or ordered to be present are allowed to attend Executive Session.

III. The MASON County Commissioners Court meets in Regular Session on the SECOND AND FOURTH MONDAY of each month UNLESS A HOLIDAY FALLS ON THAT MONDAY. For a matter or issue to appear as an agenda item on the Agenda of any Regular Meeting of the Commissioners Court, a request must be filed with and approved by at least one Commissioner or the County Judge by 12:00 p.m. (noon) on the Wednesday immediately preceding the next Regular Meeting of the Commissioners Court.

Texas Open Meetings Act does not require the notice to specify whether a matter will be considered in an open or closed session; however, items that are likely to be discussed in Executive Session may be grouped on the agenda with an indication under which provisions of the Texas Open Meetings Act the Executive Session will be heard.

IV. The business of MASON County is conducted by and between the members of the MASON County Commissioners Court and by those members of the County staff, elected officials, department heads, consultants, experts and/or members of the public requested to be present and participate. While the public is invited to attend all meetings of the Commissioners Court (except Executive Sessions) the public's participation therein is limited to that of observers unless a member of the public is invited to address the Commissioners Court on a particular issue or unless the member of the public completes a Public Participation Form and submits same to the County Clerk prior to the time the agenda item is addressed by the Court. The Court will make every reasonable effort to accommodate requests for interpreters but may need advanced notice to be able to accommodate such requests. A sample of the MASON County Commissioners Court Public Participation Form is attached hereto as Exhibit "A".

A. Each member of the public who appears before the Commissioners Court shall be limited to a maximum of five (5) minutes to make his/her remarks. Time for each speaker shall be maintained by the Administrative Assistant to the Court or such other designated representative of the Commissioners Court. Members of the public who have properly completed a Public Participation Form and submitted same to the County Clerk must wait to be recognized before they will be allowed to address the Court.

B. Maximum discussion on any agenda item, regardless of the number of members of the public wishing to address the Commissioners Court on such agenda item shall be limited to thirty (30) minutes. If more than six (6) members of the public wish to address a particular agenda item, then time allocated to members of the public recognized to speak shall be divided equally between those members of the public wishing to speak for the agenda item and those members of the public wishing to speak against the agenda item.

C. In matters of exceptional interest, the Court may, by the majority vote of the members of the Court in attendance at the meeting, either shorten or lengthen the time allocated for all members of the public and/or the amount of time allocated for all agenda items and/or a specific agenda item.

D. It is the intention of the Court to provide an open access to the citizens of MASON County to address the Commissioners Court and express themselves on issues of County Government. Members of the public are reminded that the MASON County Commissioners Court is a Constitutional Court, with both judicial and legislative powers, created under Article V, Section 1 and Section 18 of the Texas Constitution. As a Constitutional Court, the MASON County Commissioners Court also possesses the power to issue a Contempt of Court Citation under §81.023 of the Texas Local Government Code. Accordingly, members of the public in attendance at any Regular, Special and/or Emergency Meeting of the Court shall conduct themselves with proper respect and decorum in speaking to, and/or addressing the Court; in participating in public discussions before the Court; and in all actions in the presence of the Court. Those members of the public who do not conduct themselves in an orderly and appropriate manner will be ordered to leave the meeting. Refusal to abide by the Court's Order and/or continued disruption of the meeting may result in a Contempt of Court citation.

E. It is not the intention of the MASON County Commissioners Court to provide a public forum for the demeaning of any individual or group. Neither is it the intention of the Court to allow a member (or members) of the public to insult the honesty and/or integrity of the Court, as a body, or any member or members of the Court, individually or collectively. Accordingly, profane, insulting, or threatening language directed toward the Court and/or any person in the Court's presence and/or racial, ethnic, or gender slurs or epithets will not be tolerated. These Rules do not prohibit public criticism of the Commissioners Court, including criticism of any act,

omission, policy, procedure, program, or service. Violation of these rules may result in the following sanctions:

1. Cancellation of a speaker's remaining time;
2. Removal from the Commissioners Courtroom;
3. A Contempt Citation; and/or
4. Such other civil and/or criminal sanctions as may be authorized under the Constitution, Statutes and Codes of the State of Texas.

V. All members of the Court and public are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that demonstrates respect towards others and the Court itself. Behavior that impedes or disrupts the business of the Commissioners Court while Court is in session is prohibited and unlawful pursuant to Texas Penal Code § 42.05. It is the intention of MASON County Commissioners Court to attend to County business effectively and efficiently, without undue interruption. All cell phones and other mobile communication devices should be in "silent" mode at all times while Court is in session.

VI. The County Judge is the presiding officer of the MASON County Commissioners Court and is a fully participating member thereof. In the absence of the County Judge, the senior member of the Commissioners Court (in terms of total number of years as an elected representative) present at the Regular, Special, Emergency Meeting or Executive Session, shall preside over of the Court meeting. However, nothing herein shall prevent the senior member of this Commissioners Court from delegating this duty to another member of the Commissioners Court.

VII. The presiding officer of the Commissioners Court is responsible for conducting all meetings in accordance with these Rules of Decorum and Procedure. The presiding officer shall conduct the meeting in the following manner:

A. When an individual member of the Commissioners Court wishes to make a motion, the presiding officer shall first recognize the individual's right to speak. The individual may then make the motion. A second is then required prior to any discussion or debate on the matter before the Court.

B. Only after the motion and second, the presiding officer repeats the motion and opens the floor to discussion of the motion. The maker of the motion speaks first, and the presiding officer allows proponents and opponents to alternate speaking if possible. A member who has not yet spoken has precedence over those who have already voiced an opinion. The presiding officer has the authority to end discussion if it becomes too personal or too longwinded by calling for a vote.

C. Motions are limited to those listed in Exhibit B, "Motions at a Glance." A member may only make one motion at a time. The presiding officer may decline to allow more than three motions (one main, two secondary) on the floor at one time; for example, one substantive motion and two motions to amend. When multiple motions are on the floor, the last motion made should be the first voted on.

D. The presiding officer at the officer's discretion but in keeping with these rules, makes procedural rulings. The body may overrule the presiding officer's procedural ruling with a motion, second, and majority vote to do so.

E. Three members of the Court constitute a quorum unless the Court is levying taxes, in which case four members constitutes a quorum or unless the Court is canvassing an election, in which case only two members of the Court constitutes a quorum. If a quorum is present, the Judge shall take a vote by asking for the "ayes" and "nays". Silence shall indicate an "aye" vote. Abstentions should be stated on the record. Approval of a motion is attained by a majority vote of all the votes cast when a quorum is present. The presiding officer shall announce the result of the vote and each member's vote verbally to ensure a complete record.

VIII. Special Rules for the Press and Media:

A. No media personnel or equipment, including lights, cameras or microphones will be located on the Commissioners Court bench nor closer than five feet (5') in front of the Commissioners Court bench.

B. Reporters and media technicians are required to structure their movements, equipment set-up and take-down and adjustments, etc. in such a manner as to not disrupt the Commissioners Court deliberations or the ability of the public to see, hear, and participate in the proceedings.

C. Interviews shall not be conducted inside the Commissioners Courtroom during the time the Court is in session.

D. Media interviews which are conducted outside the Commissioners Courtroom should be conducted in such a manner that the interview does not disturb, impede, or disrupt the proceedings of any Regular, Special, Emergency and/or Executive Session Meeting of the Court.

IX. The Sheriff of MASON County, Texas, or his designated deputy, shall serve as the Bailiff at all Regular, Special and Emergency Meetings of the Court. However, in the event of the absence of the Sheriff, or in the event that there exists a conflict of interest between the Sheriff, any member of the Sheriff's Department, and the Commissioners Court, or in the event of an Executive Session of the Court in which the Sheriff is not an authorized participant, then in such event, the Court shall appoint such other commissioned peace officers to serve as Bailiff as may be necessary.

X. From time to time, the Commissioners Court shall conduct town meetings and public hearings. These rules of procedure, conduct and decorum shall also apply to such town meetings and public hearings, however, the Commissioners Court may adopt such additional and supplemental rules for such meetings as may be necessary and appropriate to conduct such meetings in an orderly, efficient, and proper manner.

XI. These Rules of Procedure, Conduct and Decorum at Meetings of the MASON County Commissioners Court shall be effective immediately upon adoption by the Court and shall remain in full force and effect until amended or repealed by a majority vote of the Commissioners Court. These Rules may be temporarily suspended by majority vote of the Court in a manner that does not conflict with the Texas Open Meetings Act.

ADOPTED BY THE UNANIMOUS VOTE OF THE MASON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT on this the 9 day of January, 2023.

Sheree Hardin

Sheree Hardin, County Judge

Reggie Loeffler

Reggie Loeffler, Commissioner, Pct. 1

Fred A. Estes

Fred Estes, Commissioner, Pct. 2

Buddy Schuessler

Buddy Schuessler, Commissioner, Pct. 3

Dave Underwood

Dave Underwood, Commissioner, Pct. 4

Attest:

Tam Beam

County Clerk

Exhibit A

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT

Public Participation Form

Instructions: Fill out all appropriate blanks. Please print or write legibly.

NAME: _____

MAILING ADDRESS (optional):

_____

_____

HOME TELEPHONE (optional): _____

Are you requesting an interpreter? _____

Do you represent any particular group or organization? _____

If you do represent a group or organization, please state the name, mailing address and telephone number of such group or organization.

_____

_____

_____

Which agenda item (or items) do you wish to address? _____

In general, are you for or against such agenda item (or items)?

_____

Signature: _____

NOTE: This Public Participation Form must be presented to the County Clerk prior to the time that the agenda item (or items) you wish to address are discussed before the Court.