

Port of Houston Authority

PUBLIC COMMENT POLICY



A. Policy Statement.

1. It is the policy of the Port Commission of the Port of Houston Authority of Harris County, Texas (the “Port Authority”) to encourage public comment at public meetings of the Port Commission and of its committees and task forces (“Public Meetings”), with regard to matters that relate to Port Authority affairs or within the authority of the Port Commission.

2. This Public Comment Policy (the “Policy”) is intended to provide interested parties the opportunity to present their views, while permitting the Port Commission to conduct Public Meetings in an efficient and effective manner.

3. This Policy shall not prohibit public criticism of the Port Authority or Port Commission, including criticism of any of its acts, omissions, policies, procedures, programs, or services, provided that such public criticism is not otherwise prohibited by law.

4. The Port Authority urges interested parties to address Port Authority administrative, business, or related matters with Port Authority staff prior to requesting an appearance or speaking at a Public Meeting.

B. Advance Requests to Appear at a Public Meeting.

1. Interested parties may request in advance to appear on the agenda and speak at Public Meetings. Requests should be made to the office of the Executive Director of the Port Authority or Secretary of the Port Commission by telephone, mail, email, or facsimile.

2. Such requests must be received no later than seven (7) days before the scheduled date of the Public Meeting for which the appearance is requested.

3. Requestors should provide their name, organizational affiliation, contact information, and a brief description of the subject matter of their comments.

4. The Port Authority reserves the right to determine whether the appearance of an interested party is placed on the agenda of a Public Meeting.

5. Prior to the Public Meeting the Port Authority will notify requestors whether their appearance has been added to the agenda.

C. Requests to Comment Made Immediately Prior to a Public Meeting.

1. Interested parties may also request to speak at a Public Meeting on the day of the meeting by (a) completing the sign-in sheet provided for the Public Meeting, or (b) notifying the

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office of the Executive Director or Secretary by telephone or email at least one (1) hour prior to commencement of the Public Meeting.

2. Requestors should provide their name, organizational affiliation, and a brief description of the subject matter of the appearance.

3. Prior to commencement of the Public Meeting, Port Authority staff shall notify the Chairman or other Port Commissioner presiding at the meeting of such requests.

D. Public Meeting Conduct.

1. Copies of the posted Port Commission meeting agenda are available near the entrance to the Public Meeting prior to its scheduled start, or the agenda will be electronically displayed on a meeting room screen.

2. The presiding Port Commissioner may announce the Port Authority's guidelines for conduct during the Public Meeting. Public Meetings are also subject to the requirements of the Texas Open Meetings Act (Texas Government Code Chapter 551).

3. The presiding Port Commissioner will generally conduct the Public Meeting in the order shown on the agenda, and generally call speakers first in the order shown on the agenda and then in the order shown on the sign-up sheet.

4. Notwithstanding the foregoing:

a. The Port Authority reserves the right to move any public comment to a place on the agenda of the Public Meeting to better assure the efficient conduct of Port Commission business, provided that the opportunity to address the Port Commission regarding an item on the agenda of the Public Meeting shall occur before or during the Port Commission's consideration of the item; and

b. The Port Authority reserves the right to call speakers at a Public Meeting in such order as may be necessary or convenient for the conduct of Port Commission business.

5. Persons commenting at the Public Meeting may speak when the presiding Port Commissioner calls on them.

a. Speakers must appear in person and step up to the podium (or appear remotely as provided by law), and state their name and affiliation.

b. Unless the meeting is conducted remotely, all statements and responses to comments by the Port Commissioners, or committee or task force members, must be made at the

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podium and spoken into the microphone.

c. Additional information presented by the speaker should be in paper format, or if the meeting is conducted remotely, in .pdf format and provided prior to the Public Meeting to the office of the Executive Director or Secretary, for distribution to the Port Commission, committee, or task force, and Port Authority staff. Ten (10) copies of such information should be provided if in paper format.

6. Permitted Speaking Time.

a. A speaker whose subject matter relates to an item of business on the agenda is limited to three (3) minutes speaking time.

b. A speaker whose subject matter does not relate to an item of business on the agenda is limited to three (3) minutes speaking time.

c. If more than one member of a group has requested to speak, the group must select one representative to present its comments. The group's representative is limited to three (3) minutes speaking time, regardless of whether or not the comments relate to an item of business on the agenda.

d. A speaker or group addressing a subject matter which does not relate to an item of business on the agenda, and that has spoken at any of the four previous Port Commission meetings, shall be limited to one (1) minute speaking time.

7. Unless the meeting is conducted remotely, a Port Authority staff member will time each speaker with a timer that clearly informs the presiding Port Commissioner and speakers of their elapsed or remaining speaking time. A Port Authority staff member may escort the speaker from the podium when the permitted time has elapsed, or silence the speaker in remote attendance.

8. Comments should be addressed to the Port Commission as a whole, and no inquiries, requests, etc. may be asked of Port Commissioners or staff except through the presiding Port Commissioner. The presiding Port Commissioner may refer inquiries, requests, etc., to the Executive Director for handling and later response as appropriate.

9. The presiding Port Commissioner will close the public comment session after any speakers who are on the agenda and any speakers who have signed up have been given the opportunity to speak, subject to the following.

a. Persons attending a Public Meeting shall not delay, interrupt, or disrupt the proceedings, or refuse to obey the orders of the presiding Port Commissioner.

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b. The presiding Port Commissioner may order persons who do not conduct themselves in an orderly and appropriate manner to leave the Public Meeting, and except as provided by law, deny them the opportunity to speak at that Public Meeting.

E. Policy Waivers. Except as provided by law, the Port Authority reserves the right to waive this Policy:

1. To accommodate the comments of persons and organizations invited by the Port Authority to speak at a Public Meeting; and

2. When necessary to conduct a Public Meeting efficiently and effectively.

F. Reasonable Accommodations; Translation.

1. Persons with disabilities may contact the office of the Executive Director if needing reasonable accommodations to participate in a Public Meeting. Such requests should be received at least seven (7) days prior to the Public Meeting. If a request for an accommodation has been submitted but due to circumstances is no longer needed, the office of the Executive Director should be promptly informed.

2. A member of the public who addresses the Port Commission through a translator shall be given at least twice the amount of time as a member of the public who does not require the assistance of a translator, in order to ensure that non-English speakers receive the same opportunity to address the Port Commission.

G. Adoption. This Policy was adopted by the Port Commission on October 27, 2022, as evidenced by Minute No. 2022-1027-06.