

RESOLUTION NO. 2419

**A RESOLUTION OF THE COMMISSIONERS OF OXFORD TO REPEAL
AND REPLACE THE RULES FOR CONDUCT AT COMMISSION
MEETINGS**

***PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN MEETINGS OF THE OXFORD
COMMISSIONERS***

WHEREAS, Section 3C-4 of the Oxford Town Charter provides, “All meeting [meetings] of the Commissioners shall be open to the public, and the rules of the Commissioners shall provide that residents of the Town shall have a reasonable opportunity to be heard at any meeting in regard to any municipal question”; and

WHEREAS, Section C3-7 of the Charter provides, “The Commission shall determine its own rules and order of business”, and

WHEREAS, historically, the Commission has encouraged the public to attend and observe the proceedings and has provided on the meeting agenda, a time at the end of each meeting of the Commissioners for “public comment”; and

WHEREAS, the public is encouraged to communicate with the Commissioners prior to any meeting by letters and emails any comments and/or questions at any time; and

WHEREAS, in the recent past members of the public have sought to make comments and ask questions during times other than the time designated for public comment at end of the Commissioner’s meeting; and

WHEREAS, allowing sporadic comments and questions during the time when the Commissioners are conducting the public business is disruptive and prevents the Commissioners from conducting efficient and fair meetings; and

WHEREAS, the Commissioners have determined it appropriate to allow from time to time public comment in connection with specific agenda items specifically designated by the Commissioners; and

WHEREAS, although the photographing and videotaping of meetings is permitted, such actions may be a distraction to the general audience.

NOW, THEREFORE, the Commissioners of Oxford (the “Commissioners”) hereby adopt the following rule regarding participation by the general public in open meetings of the Oxford Town Commissioners.

At any open meeting on the Commissioners, the general public is invited to attend and observe.

1. The general public may offer testimony during open meetings of the Oxford Town Commissioners as specifically provided by Maryland law or the Town of Oxford Charter.
2. The Commissioners of Oxford shall expressly invite public questions and comments before a vote taken on a Resolution or Ordinance on an agenda. The subject matter of all such testimony shall be limited to the specified Resolution or Ordinance. The presiding officer shall determine the amount of time to be allotted to such testimony.
3. At the conclusion of the business session of each meeting of the Oxford Town Commissioners, the agenda shall provide a time during which members of the general public may make comments or ask questions on any matters related to the Town. It shall be designated as “Public Comment”. Any testimony, comments or questions shall comply with the following:
 - a. Persons wanting to make comment or ask a question must raise their hand and be recognized prior to speaking.
 - b. The individual wishing to make a comment or present a question shall utilize the microphone and identify him or herself by name;
 - c. Direct all comments and questions to the Commissioners; and
 - d. Limit comments/questions to three minutes
4. The Commissioners or appropriate staff may respond to public comments or answer questions during the session. In the event an answer cannot be provided during the meeting, one or more of the Commissioners or appropriate staff will provide answers to any questions put forth as soon as practicable after the close of the meeting. The answer may be in written form (letter or email) and attached to the minutes of the meeting, or the question may be responded to orally at the next meeting.
5. All meeting participants must act in a courteous and civil manner. Defamatory comments, profanity and obscenity will not be tolerated.

6. The Commissioners will make every reasonable effort to post on the Town website the meeting agenda by the close of business on the Thursday prior to each regular Oxford Commissioners meeting. The public is encouraged to file written comments to the Commissioners. This early posting will provide time for interested parties to file written comments and questions regarding items on the agenda. Items on the agenda may be added or deleted to the agenda by the Commissioners without regard to this provision.
7. A member of the public, including any representative of the news media, may photograph, record, or videotape the proceedings of the Oxford Town Commissioners at any open session if the camera
 - a. is operated without excessively bright artificial light that disturbs the Commissioners or other persons attending the session,
 - b. does not create an excessive noise that disturbs the Commissioners or other persons attending the session, and
 - c. and does not block in whole or in part the view of any persons attending the session or the official recording of the session.
8. The President of the Oxford Town Commissioners may (1) restrict the movement of a person who is using a recording device or camera if such restriction is necessary to maintain the orderly conduct of the session, and (2) may designate a specific area within the meeting room within which all photography and videotaping equipment shall be operated.
9. A recording of an open session made by a member of the public, or any transcript derived from such recording, shall not be deemed a part of the record or any proceeding of the Oxford Town Commissioners.
10. Enforcement of these guidelines is the responsibility of the Commission President.