

## AMENDMENT #4

### **Brazos County Commissioners Court Rules of Procedure, Conduct, and Decorum**

- I. All Regular Meetings, Special Meetings, Emergency Meetings, and Executive Sessions of the Commissioners Court will be called and conducted in accordance with the provisions of the Texas Open Meetings Act, Chapter 551 of the Government Code.
- II. Regular Meetings, Special Meetings, and Emergency Meetings of the Brazos 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. Only those individuals expressly requested or ordered to be present are allowed to attend Executive Sessions.
- III. In accordance with Section 81.005(a) of the Local Government Code, at the last regular term of each fiscal year of the County, the Commissioners Court by order shall designate a day of the week on which the court shall convene in a regular term during the next fiscal year. The Commissioners Court will also designate a regular time and location to convene into a regular term during the next fiscal year.
- IV. In order for a matter of issue to appear as an agenda item on the agenda of any Regular or Special Meetings of Commissioners Court, a request must be filed with the County Judge by 12:00 p.m. (Noon) on the Thursday preceding the next Meeting of the Commissioners Court. Only the County Judge or a member of the Commissioners Court can place items on the Commissioners Court agenda.
- V. The business of Brazos County is conducted by and between the members of the Brazos 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 recognized by the Court's presiding officer, members of the public are not allowed to address the Court while it is in session. A member of the public may be recognized to speak during the public comment portion once he or she signs the public participation sign-up sheet. All members of the public who have properly signed the public participation sign-up sheet and submitted the same to the County Clerk, must wait to be recognized by the presiding officer prior to addressing the Court. Public participation sign-up sheets must be submitted at least five (5) minutes prior to the start of the posted meeting time. Upon request, someone will be provided to assist those individuals with special needs.
  - A. Each member of the public who appears before the Commissioners Court to make remarks during the public comment portion shall be limited to a

maximum of three (3) minutes for both non-agenda and agenda item comments. Time for each speaker shall be maintained by the designated representative of the Commissioners Court.

- B. Maximum discussion on non-agenda matters during the public comment section of the agenda at any Regular, Special, or Emergency Commissioners Court meeting shall be limited to thirty (30) minutes. All non-agenda matter comments must be made during “Call for Citizen input.” The County Judge or presiding officer may also require the designation of a speaker or speakers to speak for a group that share a commonality of an issue. The maximum number of speakers during the public comment section shall be limited to ten (10) members of the public.
- C. 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 ten (10) 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. A citizen who chooses to provide public comments during an agenda item will relay all their comments at once during the allowable timeframe and then take their seat. If the Court chooses to address such comments, it will do so after all speakers are seated. No further follow-up will be allowed at that time.
- D. In matters of exceptional public interest, the presiding officer at the meeting may lengthen or shorten the amount of time given to each speaker or increase or decrease the number of speakers allowed. If any member of the Court objects to the change, a vote will be taken on the change to the normal procedure.
- E. It is the intention of the Court to provide open access for the citizens of Brazos County to address the Commissioners Court and express themselves on issues of county government. Members of the public are reminded that the Brazos 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 Brazos County Commissioners Court also possesses the power to issue a Contempt of Court citation under Section 81.024 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. Additionally, disruptive behavior from the audience will not be tolerated, including but not limited to, verbal and/or physical outbursts. In order to encourage public comment while maintaining efficiency with minimal disruption regardless of anyone’s position for or against any issue, applause will be allowed only when the Court recognizes an individual and/or group with a proclamation, resolution, or for other meritorious actions.

Proper attire is mandatory. Inappropriate attire includes but is not limited to, items such as cutoffs, tank tops, muscle shirts, shorts, barefoot, flip flops or clothing with suggestive, offensive, vulgar, racist, sexist pictures, slogans or depictions of provocative clothing styled or worn to provoke, distract or disrupt. Those members of the public who are inappropriately attired and/or 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.

- F. All cell phones and other mobile communication devices should be in "silent" mode at all times while Court is in session.
- G. Members of the public, including media, may not approach the Commissioners Court bench during times in which Court is in session, unless expressly authorized by a member of the Commissioners Court. This includes times in which the Court's session is in recess and the transition to an Executive Session.
- H. It is not the intention of the Brazos 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(s) of the public to insult the honesty and/or integrity of the Court, any member(s) of the Court, or employee(s) of the County. Accordingly, profane, insulting, defaming, or threatening language including, but not limited to, racial, ethnic, or gender slurs or epithets directed toward the Court and/or any person in the Court's presence, will not be tolerated. Violation of these rules may result in the following sanctions:
  - 1. Cancellation of the speaker's time
  - 2. Removal from the Commissioners Court
  - 3. Contempt citation
  - 4. Such other civil and/or criminal sanctions as may be authorized under the Constitution, Statutes, and Codes of the State of Texas.
- I. During the course of the meeting, the presiding officer has discretion to take items out of agenda order for the convenience of the Court, county staff, or others in attendance.

VI. The County Judge is the presiding officer of the Brazos County Commissioners Court and is a fully participating member thereof. In the event of the absence of the County Judge, the County Judge can delegate this duty to another member of the Commissioners Court present at the Regular Meeting, Special Meeting, Emergency Meeting, or Executive Session to serve as Judge Pro-Tem of the Court. In the event the County Judge is unavailable to delegate this duty, the senior member of the Commissioners Court (in terms of total number of years as an elected representative) present at the Regular Meeting, Special Meeting, Emergency Meeting, or Executive Session shall serve as the Judge Pro-Tem of the Court or delegate the duty to another member of the Commissioners Court.

VII. 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 or Podium, and no closer than five (5) feet in front of the Commissioners Court Bench during the time the Court is in session.
  - B. Reporters and media technicians are required to structure their movements, equipment set-up and take-down adjustments, etc., in such a manner as to not disrupt the Commissioners Court deliberation or the ability of the public to see, hear, and participate in the proceedings.
  - C. Except as otherwise authorized by the presiding officer of the Court, interviews shall be conducted outside of the Commissioners Courtroom.
  - 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 Meeting, Special Meeting, Emergency Meeting, or Executive Session meeting of the Court.
  - E. Media personnel are not permitted to approach the Commissioners Court bench to request interviews until the meeting has been adjourned. This includes times in which the Court's session is in recess and the transition to a closed executive session.
  - F. Exceptions to these press and media rules can be waived at the presiding officers' discretion.
- VIII. The Sheriff or the Constable or his designated deputy, shall serve as emergency bailiff at all Regular Meetings, Special Meetings, and Emergency Meetings. However, in the event there exists a conflict of interest between the Sheriff or any member of the Sheriff's Department, or the Constable or any member of the serving Constable's department and the Commissioners Court, or in the event of any Executive Session in which either the Sheriff or Constable is not an authorized participant, the Court shall appoint such other commissioned peace officers to serve as bailiff as may be necessary.
- IX. From time to time, the Commissioners Court may have town meetings, public hearings, and/or workshops. These Rules of Procedure, Conduct, and Decorum shall also apply to the same; however, the Commissioners Court may adopt such additional and supplemental rules for such meetings may be necessary and appropriate to conduct such meetings in an orderly, efficient, and proper manner.
- X. These Rules of Procedure, Conduct, and Decorum at meetings of the Brazos 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.