

PUBLIC COMMENT AT MEETINGS OF THE VERMONT STATE COLLEGES' BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Background

Vermont's Open Meeting law (Title I, Chapter 5, 1 V.S.A. § 310, *et seq.*) provides that:

At an open meeting, the public shall be given a reasonable opportunity to express its opinion on matters considered by the public body during the meeting, as long as order is maintained. Public comment shall be subject to reasonable rules established by the chairperson.

1 V.S.A. § 312(h).

A Guide to Open Meetings by Vermont Secretary of State (revised January 2019), states at page 12:

[T]he board chair may establish reasonable rules to maintain order, and reasonable limitations on the amount of time for each speaker are not unusual or improper.

Rules for Public Comment

1. Members of the public shall be afforded a reasonable opportunity to express opinions about matters considered by the body, so long as order is maintained according to these rules. All participants in the meeting are expected to be civil and respectful toward one another.
2. Public comment shall generally be held at the start of the meeting to provide the public with an opportunity to make public comments in advance of votes on action items. However, the Chair¹ may, in their discretion, allow public comment on

¹ The Chair refers to the Chair of the Board for meetings of the full Board of Trustees, as well as to Chairs of the Board's Committees for committee meetings. If the Chair is unavailable, the Vice Chair of the Board or the Committee will serve as the Chair. If neither the Chair or the Vice Chair are available, another trustee may be designated to serve as the Chair of a Board or Committee meeting.

individual agenda items during the meeting or move the public comment to another part of the agenda.

3. Up to thirty minutes shall be afforded for public comment. In special circumstances, the time may be extended by majority vote of the Board or Committee members.
4. Public comments must be addressed to the Chair or to the Board or Committee as a whole, and not to any individual member of the Board or to individual members of the public.
5. Members of the public must be acknowledged by the Chair before speaking.
6. Members of the public must state their name before making their public comment.
7. Members of the public who have signed up to speak in advance of the meeting will be called upon to speak first, in the order in which they signed up. If there is time remaining for further public comment, the Chair will invite those who did not have a chance to sign-up to raise their hand, to be recognized by the Chair, and to make a public comment.
8. Public comments shall not exceed 3 minutes in length and the Chair may request assistance from a staff member to remind speakers when their time is up.
9. If a member of the public has already spoken on a topic, that member may not be recognized again until others have first been given the opportunity to comment and if there is time remaining for additional public comment.
10. Board members are not required to respond to public comments during the course of the meeting.

Be it Approved: August 3, 2022

Eileen Y Dickinson

Eileen "Lynn" Dickinson
Chair of the Board of Trustees
Vermont State Colleges