

# Corporation of Harpers Ferry

## Public Meeting Policy and Procedures

Approved and Adopted - 25 March 2021

### Policy:

Whenever the Corporation of Harpers Ferry (“the Town”) conducts a Public Meeting, the following procedures and guidelines will be in effect.

The Town seeks frequent, effective and meaningful public participation with as much awareness of Town governance activities as is possible and practical. When conducting meetings, the Town governing body (Town Council) and all deliberative bodies (Boards, Commissions, Committees, Sub-Committees), herein referred to as body or bodies, aim to follow the intent and all requirements of WV State Code in the conduct of its business. In particular, Town bodies will meet or exceed the intent and requirements of the WV Open Government Meetings Act. This policy is intended to formalize the Town’s approach with regard to procedures and guidelines for all Public Meetings and will be in effect as of the date adopted.

### Procedures and Guidelines: *(\*modified for virtual meeting conditions)*

1. All regular and special meetings will be publicly noticed as required with a posted agenda.
2. Meetings will begin promptly at the posted times.
3. A quorum of the body is required for all regular and special meetings.
4. Minutes will be taken and made available publicly.
5. The presiding official for a meeting will be pre-designated and as prescribed by Harpers Ferry Ordinance(s).
6. The presiding official for a meeting will ensure that the meeting proceeds in an orderly and efficient manner. Rules of conduct as prescribed in Harpers Ferry Ordinance Article 509.09 will be strictly enforced at all public meetings.
7. At the discretion of the presiding official, a formal public comment period may be included on the agenda for comment on any matter pertaining to the Town’s business. The public comment period, if allowed, will be at the beginning of the meeting. A maximum of twenty (20) minutes shall be set aside for the public to address the body.
8. If a speaker has written information to share with the body, copies must be distributed to the presiding official within 24 hours of the meeting. It will be the responsibility of the presiding official to determine if the information is to be distributed to all other members of the body.
9. Members of the public who wish to speak during the meeting are required to sign-up in advance, completing all requested information. A sign-up list will be made available for ten (10) minutes immediately prior to a meeting. The sign-up list will be closed as soon as the meeting is “called to order” by the presiding official.

10. The presiding official will determine the order in which a speaker is heard. Each speaker must raise their hand to be formally recognized by the presiding official and, when called upon, will stand at the podium, announcing their name and where they reside, before proceeding.
11. When public comments are allowed, a public speaker will be given a maximum of three (3) minutes. Unused minutes may not be transferred to another speaker once time is yielded. The speaker will be prompted when only thirty (30) seconds remain.
12. Comments will be professionally and respectfully presented. Personal attacks, name calling, character assaults and similar negative intimations will not be condoned.
13. Only the speaker will be recognized. All others in attendance will not be permitted to speak, object, voice agreement or disagreement, or conduct themselves in any other manner that disrupts the meeting.

#### **Other Format/Forums:**

1. A “Public Work-Shop” may be scheduled when a topic is of possibly large and significant impact on the Town, residents or business owners/operators. This is not a substitute for a public meeting and, in fact, will be undertaken in addition to State code requirements. The Town believes a workshop format encourages public participation in Town governance deliberations and meetings and provides a greater opportunity for fruitful dialog among participants and with the members of the governing body and/or deliberative bodies. Public workshops are subject to the WV Open Government Meetings Act and will be noticed as done for regular and special meetings and, if timing allows, also indicated on the Town website meeting calendar and/or newsletter. Minutes are to be taken.
2. From time to time a subgroup of the governing body and/or deliberative bodies, often together, with other volunteers, will gather as a “Working Session” to perform analyses, prepare draft documents, or other activities in preparation for full deliberation and action at a later public meeting. These activities are in the nature of work expected from a larger staff, if the Town had one. Working sessions are subject to the WV Open Government Meetings Act and will be noticed as done for regular and special meetings and, if timing allows, also indicated on the Town website meeting calendar and/or newsletter. Minutes will be taken.

**NOTE:** The purpose of the Open Meetings Act is to allow citizens to observe the governing body, and/or deliberative bodies, for purposes of promoting transparency. The governing body, and/or deliberative bodies, are encouraged to have a public comment period; however, it is not required.

#### **\* Virtual Meeting Conditions:**

##### ***Procedures and Guidelines: (modified)***

*Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, until further notification, Town public meetings will be held virtually, via the Zoom webinar platform. In an effort to provide an opportunity for better public engagement, the Town will strive to conduct all virtual webinars in a manner that closely resembles an “in-person” meeting experience. The presiding official (and/or their designee) will facilitate the virtual webinar, overseeing the management of the public’s remote participation.*

*These modified procedures and guidelines are intended for members of the public, and/or invited guests who wish to participate in, or publicly speak during a Town public meeting being conducted via a Zoom virtual webinar. All other procedures and guidelines as noted in this policy remain in effect.*

### **Webinar Access:**

- 1. In order for members of the public or invited guests to join and participate in a virtual meeting, a home computer, laptop or mobile device, and a strong internet connection is required. It is recommended that the Zoom application be downloaded.*
- 2. A URL address link will be posted to the Corporation of Harpers Ferry website meeting calendar for members of the public to log into a virtual meeting webinar.*
- 3. A helpful document, titled [Virtual Webinar – Information and User-Guide](#), will be posted to the Town website. This User-Guide provides additional instructions on Zoom webinar functionality and should be referenced for better understanding and navigating virtual meetings held by the Town.*

### **Public Participation:**

*Defined - The public are residents and/or members of the general public who wish to join the virtual meeting webinar and participate by making a public comment before the governing and/or deliberative body. Public participants will not be visible during the virtual webinar, only audio will be heard in the attendee role.*

- 1. Upon entering the webinar, public attendees must enter their given names in order to participate or to be called upon during the public comment period.*
  - Note: inappropriate/offensive display names may result in immediate removal.*
- 2. Members of the public who join the webinar will do so as an “attendee” in a “listen-only” muted mode. The facilitator will unmute attendees who wish to speak, one-by-one, only during the public comment period.*
- 3. To make a comment, during the public comment period, use the “raise hand” icon to be called upon by the presiding official or facilitator. The facilitator will unmute to allow the comment.*
  - Note: Please ensure no background noise interrupts the webinar.*

### **Invited Guest Participation:**

*Defined - Invited guests are those who have been asked by the governing and/or deliberative body to participate in the virtual meeting webinar, or those who are on the agenda to present, speak or provide a report. Invited guests will be visible during the webinar only when speaking in the panelist role and will no longer be visible once returned to the attendee role.*

- 1. Upon entering the webinar, invited guests must enter their given names in order to participate or to be called upon during the agenda related comment period.*
  - Note: inappropriate/offensive display names may result in immediate removal.*
- 2. An invited guest may join the webinar in either the “panelist” or “attendee” role as predetermined by the governing and/or deliberative body.*
- 3. To present, speak or provide a report, during the agenda related comment period use the “raise hand” icon to be called upon by the presiding official or facilitator. The facilitator will move an*

*invited guest from the role of “attendee” to “panelist” for each corresponding agenda item, after which the invited guest will be returned to the role of “attendee.”*

- *Note: Please ensure no background noise or visual disturbance interrupts the webinar.*

### **Webinar Phone-In:**

*Members of the public who wish to join a public meeting by phone-in, may do so, but will not have the “raise hand” functionality required to participate and make public comment.*

1. *Dial-in information will be publicly posted on the Town’s website under the Meetings and Events Calendar at <https://www.harpersferrywv.us/calendar.html>*

### **Digital Document Review:**

*Agenda and supporting documents will be available for public review and posted on the Town’s website, at [www.harpersferrywv.us](http://www.harpersferrywv.us), under the Meeting Notices and Records link.*