

**THE WARREN COUNTY LIBRARY COMMISSION
RULES OF CONDUCT AND DECORUM FOR PUBLIC MEETINGS**

WHEREAS, a majority of Americans believe that our society is increasingly uncivil and this problem is particularly acute and particularly detrimental on a national, state and local political arena as work threatens government's ability to function democratically and effectively; and

WHEREAS, across the nation many counties, municipalities and local governments have adopted policies and rules to promote civility and maintain decorum at public meetings; and

WHEREAS, the Warren County Library maintains its commitment to the democratic process, individual rights of expression, robust debate and tolerance for disparate views; and

WHEREAS, the Warren County Library convenes public meetings to address controversial issues that engender passionate and often conflicting opinions; and

WHEREAS, an atmosphere of instability and disrespect at these meetings can stifle participation and debate, threaten the quality of decisions and undermine the local democratic process; and

WHEREAS, adopting rules of decorum applicable to all public meetings will ensure that civic engagement and local democracy continue to flourish in the Warren County Library; and

WHEREAS, the State of New Jersey, Department of Community Affairs, Division of Local Government Services, has promulgated regulations requiring the adoption by county and local governments of rules and procedures for the conduct of public meetings.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Warren County Library Commission, County of Warren, State of New Jersey, as follows:

1. Definitions: For the purpose of this Resolution, the following terms, phrases and words shall have the meaning as stated herein.
 - a. "Chair" shall mean the member of the Warren County Library Commission presiding over the conduct of the public meeting.
 - b. "Public Meeting" or "Meeting" shall mean any meeting of the Warren County Library Commission subject to the requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-6, *et seq.*
 - c. "Remote Meeting" shall mean a public meeting that is conducted by any means of live telephonic, electronic and/or other audio or video communication equipment.
2. General. Any person may address the Warren County Library Commissioners on any subject of interest to the Warren County Library at a public meeting.
3. Manner of Addressing the Warren County Library Commissioners.
 - a. No person shall be permitted to address the Warren County Library Commissioners without first being recognized by the Chair.

- b. Upon recognition by the Chair, each person wishing to address the Warren County Library Commissioners shall state, for the record in an audible tone, their name and address, the subject they wish to discuss and, if applicable, the person or persons they are representing.
 - i. Those physically present in the meetings chambers shall promptly leave the seating area and approach the podium or area designated when addressing the Warren County Library Commissioners.
 - ii. In the event the public meeting is held as a remote meeting, or in which persons may attend the meeting in-person or by telephone or remote meeting option, public comments may be submitted in advance of the meeting by email or written letter to the Warren County Library Commission. All properly and timely public comments submitted to, and received by, the Warren County Library Commission prior to the meeting will be read aloud into the record during the portion of the meeting reserved for public comment and addressed in the same manner as if the commenter was present in the meeting chambers. In order to be memorialized in the record at the public meeting all such comments must be received by the Warren County Library Commission no later than 4:30 p.m. on the day prior to the meeting.
- c. All comments, questions and remarks shall be addressed to the Warren County Library Commission generally and shall not be addressed to any member of the Warren County Library Commissioners individually, or any County employee, without permission of the Chair and, if applicable, the Library Commissioner to whom it is addressed.
- d. No person, other than the Chair, members of the Warren County Library Commission and the person having the floor shall be permitted to enter into any discussion without permission of the Chair.
- e. All public comments, questions and remarks, whether made in-person, telephonically, remotely or submitted in writing in advance of the meeting, shall be limited to four (4) minutes per person. No person shall be permitted to assign or give their time for public comment to any other person.
 - i. In order to expedite discussion and to avoid repetitious presentations, whenever any group of persons is to address the Warren County Library Commission on the same subject, the Chair, may request that a spokesperson be chosen by the group to address the Library Commission; and, if additional matters are to be presented by any other members of the same group, to limit the number of persons addressing the Library Commission.
 - ii. The same time limitation shall apply to the reading of any public comments submitted in advance of the meeting, which shall be read from the beginning, until such time as the time limit is reached. As with in-person public comments, duplicative written comments may be passed over, but will nonetheless be noted for the record with the content summarized.
- f. After a motion has been made to close the public hearing on any matter or the public comment portion of the meeting, no member of the public shall be permitted to address the Warren County Library Commission from the audience on any matter under consideration without first securing permission to do so.

- g. Notwithstanding anything herein to the contrary, the Warren County Library Commission may at any time temporarily waive, relax, or suspend any rule, procedural requirement or formalities pursuant to this Resolution by affirmative vote of the majority.

4. Decorum

- a. Any member of the public making comments, or acting in a manner, that is disruptive to the orderly conduct of any meeting shall be called to order by the Chair. Disruptive comments and actions shall include sustained inappropriate statements and behaviors, such as, but not necessarily limited to, profanity, threats, defamatory statements, yelling, shouting, whistling, booing, hissing, incessant clapping, foot-stamping or stomping, intentional or repeated interruptions and other actions, statements or conduct which disrupt, disturb, obstruct or interfere with the orderly conduct of the public meeting.
- b. If, upon being called to order, such person continues to disrupt the meeting, the Chair may order the person to leave the meeting. If such person refuses to remove themselves from the meeting, the Chair may have the person removed.
- c. In the event such person is participating in the meeting telephonically or remotely, the Chair may direct the appropriate staff to mute or continue muting the disruptive member of the public and warn that continued disruption may result in their being prevented from speaking during the portions of the meeting open to public comments or removed from the remote meeting. A member of the public who continues to be disruptive after being called to order may be muted while other members of the public are allowed to proceed with their questions and comments. If time permits, the disruptive individual will be allowed to speak after all other members of the public have been given the opportunity to make comment. Should the person remain disruptive, the individual may be muted or kept on mute for the remainder of the public meeting, or removed from the public meeting.

**ESTABLISHED AND ADOPTED UNDER RESOLUTION 2024-16
At the Warren County Library Commission Meeting on 9/26/2024**