

# CITY OF APALACHICOLA

## Rules of Engagement for Remote Participation for PUBLIC COMMENT during Commission Meetings

*(Adopted Pursuant to the City's Rules of Procedure)*

### **I. Purpose**

This policy establishes standards governing remote participation in meetings of the City Commission to ensure compliance with Florida's Government in the Sunshine Law, maintain decorum, protect due process, and promote orderly and efficient public meetings.

### **II. Applicability**

These Rules apply to:

- ❖ City Commissioners participating remotely (when permitted by law);
- ❖ Board or committee members participating remotely (when authorized);
- ❖ Members of the public participating remotely via approved electronic platform;
- ❖ All hybrid meetings conducted by the City.

### **III. Authorization and Platform**

1. The City has designated an official electronic platform for remote participation, i.e. Vimeo.
2. Notice of remote participation procedures shall be included in the published meeting agenda.
3. The City Clerk shall serve as Remote Meeting Administrator or designate technical support personnel.



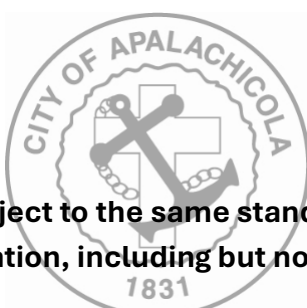
#### **IV. Verification and Recognition**

- 1. Remote speakers shall be recognized by the Chair in the same manner as in-person participants.**
- 2. All remote participants must:**
  - Register as required prior to speaking;
  - Identify themselves by full name and municipality of residence;
  - Remain audible for the duration of their public comment, or otherwise the Chair may proceed with next speaker
  - Remain visible (if video-enabled) unless excused for technical limitations.
- 3. The Chair retains full authority to:**
  - Recognize speakers;
  - Enforce time limits;
  - Rule speakers out of order;
  - Suspend remote privileges for violations of decorum.

#### **V. Decorum and Conduct Standards**

Order must be preserved. No person shall, by speech or otherwise, delay or interrupt the proceedings or the peace of the Board or disturb any person having the floor. No person shall refuse to obey the orders of the Chair or the Board. Any person making irrelevant, impertinent, or slanderous remarks or who becomes boisterous shall not be considered orderly or decorous. Any person, addressing the Board, who becomes disorderly or who fails to confine remarks to the identified subject or business at hand shall be cautioned by the Chair and given the opportunity to conclude remarks in a decorous manner and within the designated time limit. Any person failing to comply as cautioned shall be barred from making any additional comments during the meeting by the Chair unless permission to continue or again address the Board is granted by a majority vote of the Commissioners present and eligible to vote.

**If the Chair or the Board declares an individual out of order, he or she will be disabled from speaking and/or removed from the meeting virtual waiting room.**



**All remote participants are subject to the same standards of civility and decorum required for in-person participation, including but not limited to:**

- No profanity, threats, or abusive language;
- No personal attacks toward Commissioners, staff, or members of the public;
- No disruptive conduct, background noise, or visual distractions;
- No speaking outside of recognized time.

Microphones shall remain muted until the participant is recognized.

Failure to comply may result in:

- Immediate muting;
- Removal from the remote platform;
- Termination of speaking privileges for that meeting.

## **VI. Public Comment Procedures**

### **❖ Addressing the Board**

1) When the citizen's name is called, the citizen shall “raise hand” in the Vimeo Meeting Waiting Room and wait to be acknowledged. Speaker shall provide the following information in an audible tone of voice for the designated time limit:

(a) Name;

(b) Residence or business address;

(c) If requested by the Chair, the citizen may be required to state whether the citizen speaks for a group or a third party, if the citizen represents an organization, whether the view expressed by the citizen represents an established policy or position approved by the organization, and whether the citizen is being compensated by the organization.

2) All remarks shall be addressed to the Board as a body and not to any Commissioner specifically.

3) No citizen, other than a Commissioner, and the citizen having the floor, may be permitted to enter into any discussion, either directly or through a Commissioner,



without permission of the Chair. No question may be asked except through the Chair.

- 4) Speakers should make their comments concise and to the point and present any data or evidence they wish the Board to consider. No citizen may speak more than once on the same subject unless specifically granted permission by the Chair.
- 5) Time limits shall be identical to in-person public comment periods, five (5) minutes.
- 6) Chat functions (if enabled) shall not serve as a substitute for recognized public comment and may be disabled at the City's discretion.
- 7) Written comments submitted electronically prior to the meeting may be entered into the record at the discretion of the Chair.

## **VII. Commissioner and Board Member Remote Participation**

1. Remote participation by elected or appointed officials shall comply with applicable Florida law.
2. A quorum must be physically present unless otherwise permitted by statute.
3. Remote participants must:
  - Maintain continuous audio presence;
  - Avoid participation from moving vehicles or public settings that compromise meeting integrity;
  - Abstain from voting if technical interruptions prevent full participation in discussion.

If technical failure prevents meaningful participation, the Chair may recess the meeting or proceed without the remote participant.

## **VIII. Technical Disruptions**

1. The City is not responsible for individual connectivity failures.
2. If the remote platform fails system-wide, the Chair may:
  - Recess the meeting;



- Continue with in-person attendance only (if legally permissible);
  - Ask that your comments be submitted electronically e.g. email etc.
3. Public comment periods shall not be reopened solely due to individual technical failure.

## **IX. Recording and Public Record**

1. Remote meetings shall be recorded consistent with City policy.
2. All communications submitted electronically for public comment are public records.
3. Unauthorized recording that disrupts the meeting may result in removal from the platform.

## **X. Enforcement**

The Chair shall enforce these Rules in the same manner as in-person meeting decorum provisions contained within the City's Rules of Procedure.

Progressive enforcement measures may include:

1. Verbal warning;
2. Muting;
3. Removal from platform;

## **XI. Severability**

If any portion of this policy is found inconsistent with state law, the remaining provisions shall remain in full force and effect.