



Public Meeting Improvement Research, Supplemental

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OBJECTIVE

The intent of this report is to gather public comment card procedures and examples from several municipalities in Florida as supplemental research to the Public Meeting Improvements Research Report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report examines the public comment procedures for the following Florida municipalities: Tallahassee, Ocala, St. Augustine, Archer, and Alachua County. Research indicated that three cities (Tallahassee, Ocala, and St. Augustine) had at least one form of registration expected from the public in order for them to speak in City Commission meetings, while Archer and Alachua County did not require advance registration to speak. This was typically a card provided by the Clerk's office that was to be filled out prior to the start of the meeting upon. In Tallahassee, Alachua County, and Archer members of the public are also allowed to participate in meetings virtually so long as they abide by the regulations set by the city.^{1 2 3 4 5} The public comment procedures of cities including Coral Springs, Orlando, Fort Lauderdale, Clearwater, Jacksonville, Lakeland, Hollywood, West Palm Beach, Palm Bay, Pompano Beach, Port St. Lucie, St. Petersburg and Tampa are outlined in the original Public Meeting Improvements Research Report, with most requiring some form of registration to speak at a public meeting.

PRACTICES FROM OTHER JURISDICTIONS

Tallahassee, Florida

Public Comment Regulations: Anyone from the public is welcome to attend and speak for up to three minutes per item. At the start of the Covid 19 pandemic, the City of Tallahassee implemented virtual attendance and public comment options through Zoom, a process that had not been utilized prior to the pandemic. Citizens who wish to comment during the meeting have two options including registering to speak virtually (via phone or computer) no later than 9 p.m. on the day before the meeting, or, registering in person at the meeting.⁶⁷

Three forms of public participation are available:

- Virtual Attendance: [Registration Form](#)

¹ <https://www.talgov.com/cityleadership/citizeninput>

² <https://www.ocalafl.org/government/public-notice#instructions>

³ City Clerk Office Assistant Maria Lopes, phone call, January 9, 2023

⁴ <https://alachuacounty.us/depts/bocc/meetings/pages/past-meeting-schedules.aspx#:~:text=and%20in%2Dperson,-,Public%20comment%20will%20be%20taken%20both%20virtually%20and%20in%2Dperson,that%20permits%20adequate%20social%20distancing.>

⁵ <https://www.cityofarcher.com/administration/page/city-manager>

⁶ <https://www.talgov.com/cityleadership/citizeninput>

⁷ Matthew Lute, City of Tallahassee Director of Records, phone interview, 01/23/2023

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- Requirements: Name, Address, Email Address and Phone Number. A registration confirmation and instructions on how to log on or call in to the meeting will be emailed to the participant following their registration. On the day of the meeting, participants will receive additional instructions on how to join the meeting via email.⁸
- Email: [Registration Form](#)
 - Requirements: Name, Email Address, Message. The email must be sent in before the meeting and done through the online link.⁹
- In Person: Members of the public show up prior to the meeting and fill out a comment card. When completed they give the card to the City Clerk or the individual running the meeting.¹⁰

Ocala, Florida

Public Comment Regulations: The City will accommodate all guests who wish to make public comments, subject to seating/space limitations. Public comments are limited to three (3) minutes, however additional time may be granted by City Council President. Guests who wish to make public comment but are unable to enter the building once capacity is reached, will be allowed inside and in council chambers to speak once other guests have exited the building.

Two forms of public participation are available during meetings:

- Email or Physical Mail: For individuals unable to or uncomfortable with attending meetings in person, written comments can be submitted by emailing the City Clerk no later than 2 pm the day of the meeting at CityCouncil@ocalafl.org. Alternatively, comments may be mailed to the City Manager's office. All written comments received by the deadline will be distributed to the mayor, city council members, and appropriate staff prior to the start of the meeting.¹¹
- In Person: Those who wish to make a public comment may download [a speaker request form](#) and email it to the City Clerk's office at clerk@ocalafl.org in advance of a meeting or submit in-person at the meeting; or utilize their right to speak during regular public comment.¹²

⁸ <https://www.talgov.com/cityleadership/speaker>


⁹ <https://www.talgov.com/Main/email?emailto=ccaides>

¹⁰ <https://www.talgov.com/cityleadership/citizeninput>

¹¹ <https://www.ocalafl.org/government/public-notices#instructions>

¹² <https://www.ocalafl.org/home/showpublisheddocument/3275/637552814960130000>

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SPEAKER REQUEST FORM

Public Comments are welcomed and appreciated.

COMPLETE AND SUBMIT TO THE CITY CLERK BEFORE START OF MEETING.

Public comments and public presentations are limited to three (3) minutes.

Prior to speaking at the podium, you must state your name and address for the public record. To maintain order, speakers may not approach City Council Members or the Mayor at their desk without the Council President's permission to do so. All materials for distribution must be given to the attending clerk for their distribution to Council.

Public Hearings:

- Persons wishing to designate a spokesperson to speak on their behalf regarding a public hearing matter must themselves be present at the public hearing for the designation to be approved by City Council.
- Representative spokespersons shall be allowed no less than five (5) minutes to speak regarding a public hearing matter, with one (1) additional minute permitted for each designation, up to a maximum of fifteen (15) minutes.

(PLEASE PRINT)

NAME: _____ PHONE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

AGENDA ITEM: _____

Note: In order to better organize the discussion, the Council President may delay a particular comment until the agenda item is called and after staff has made their presentation.

☐ *ALLOCATE MY TIME TO: _____

WHEN YOUR NAME IS CALLED, STEP TO THE PODIUM. STATE YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS FOR THE RECORD. COMMENTS ARE LIMITED TO A MAXIMUM OF THREE (3) MINUTES.

QUESTION/COMMENT: _____

*Speakers may allocate time only when present and only during Public Hearings - Council Rules of Order Article 15 (c)(6)

St. Augustine, Florida

One form of public participation is available during meetings:

- In Person: St. Augustine does not offer any alternative form of participation for members of the public during Commission meetings. In order for a member of the public to address the Council, they must fill out the card prior to the start of the meeting. The City of St. Augustine has been conducting this regulation of public comment for a majority of the time public comment has been instituted and has not switched to a new format in the last 5 years. ¹³

¹³ Maria Lopes, City Clerk Office Assistant, phone interview, January 9, 2023

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■ S P E A K E R C A R D ■

**For the record, please provide name, home address,
and the topic on which you would like to speak.**

Full name

Home address

I wish to speak during:

☐ **General Public Comments**
3 minute limit per individual

☐ **Advertised Public Hearing**
Relating to agenda item noted below
3 minute limit per individual

Topic on which you would like to speak

When completed, give card to member of city staff to give to City Clerk.

Alachua County, Florida

Public Comment Regulations: Anyone from the public is welcome to attend and speak for up to three minutes per item. The County allows members of the public to attend and participate in meetings either in person or virtually. The public can make comments on agenda items only at the 12 PM meetings, not during the evening meetings. The county has conducted this style of public comment since 2004 and found that it has been the most effective way to allow the public to provide their commentary during meetings due to the lack of barriers present for one to express their comments or questions.¹⁴

Two forms of public participation are available:

- Virtual Attendance:
 - Requirements: Individuals can find the Zoom invitation information on the [County's website](#) up to a week prior to the meeting's date. They are not required to register beforehand or fill out a form. The online meetings were implemented at the start of Covid

¹⁴ Mark Sexton, Alachua County Communications Director, phone interview, 01/23/2023

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19 and have remained in effect per the preferences of the general public and members in City Council.¹⁵

- In Person: Members of the public are not required to fill out any registration form or public comment card prior to the meeting. If an individual wishes to make comment about an agenda item, they can do so during the allotted time given by standing up, announcing their name, and giving their comment. If there is general comment to be made beyond the matters being discussed, members of the public can also provide their comment towards the end of the meeting.¹⁶

Archer, Florida

Public Comment Regulations: Anyone from the public is welcome to attend and speak for up to three minutes per item. The County allows members of the public to attend and participate in meetings either in person or virtually. Virtual participation was introduced at the start of the Covid 19 pandemic and has been utilized ever since in order to provide members of the public more opportunities to make comment during City Commission meetings.¹⁷

Two forms of public participation are available:

- Virtual Attendance:
 - Requirements: Individuals can find the Zoom invitation information on the [County's website](#) up to a week prior to the meeting's date. They are not required to register beforehand or fill out a form.¹⁸
- In Person: Members of the public are not required to fill out a card or registration form of any kind prior to the meeting if they are looking to make a comment in regards to the meeting agenda. If a person would like to make public comment, they are to announce themselves during the appropriate time in the agenda and address the Council.¹⁹

REFERENCES

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Mark Sexton, Alachua County Communications Director, phone interview, 01/23/2023

¹⁶ Mark Sexton, Alachua County Communications Director, phone interview, 01/23/2023

¹⁷ Deanna Alltop, City of Archer Deputy City Clerk, phone interview, 01/23/2023

¹⁸ Deanna Alltop, City of Archer Deputy City Clerk, phone interview, 01/23/2023

¹⁹ Deanna Alltop, City of Archer Deputy City Clerk, phone interview, 01/23/2023

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