

BERKS COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARIES SYSTEM PUBLIC COMMENT POLICY

POLICY STATEMENT

In accordance with the requirements of the "Sunshine Act," Act of July 3, 1986, P.L. 388, No. 84 65 P.S. 271 et seq., as amended, the Berks County Library System Advisory Board will provide a reasonable opportunity at each public meeting for citizens to comment on matters of library business.

PURPOSE STATEMENT

This policy is intended to provide for public participation in BCPL Advisory Board meetings and establish public comment procedures whether the meeting is held in person, virtual, or in a hybrid format.

DEFINITIONS

"Board" shall refer to the Berks County Library System Advisory Board

"System Office" shall refer to the Berks County Library System Headquarters located at 1040 Berks Road, Leesport, PA 19533.

ACTIONS/PROCEDURES

1. There will be provided at the beginning of the agenda for each public meeting an opportunity for speakers to comment one time on printed agenda items which are before the Board, or comment on matters germane to Library business. Germane comments are comments the subject matter of which relates to items or issues which are currently before the Board for consideration or which may come before the Board at a future date. Such time on the agenda shall be titled "Public Comment." The following guidelines are established for this portion of an in-person public meeting:
 - a. Speakers who wish to address the Board must sign the meeting sign-in sheet, located in the lobby area of the System Office, prior to the start of the meeting. Sign-ins must include name, and library name (if acting as a library representative) or municipality name.
 - b. Comment shall be received only after the speaker is recognized by the Chair conducting the meeting.
 - c. The speaker shall proceed to the front of the conference room and announce his or her name and library name prior to addressing the Board.
 - d. In-person comments are limited to three minutes per comment.
 - e. The Chair may rule out-of-order profane, scandalous, impertinent, irrelevant and redundant comments, or comments the discernible purpose or effect of which is to disrupt or needlessly protract the proceedings of the meeting.
 - f. The Chair may call a recess or adjournment to another time when the lack of public decorum interferes with the orderly conduct of the meeting.
 - g. The Chair may allocate available time among speakers wishing to comment.
 - h. The meeting comment period is limited to a total of 30 minutes including both in-person and virtual comments.
 - i. At the discretion of the Chair conducting the meeting, a group of speakers registered to address the Board on the same issue may be required to designate a spokesperson.
2. For meetings conducted by virtual means, the following guidelines are established for public comment:

- a. Speakers wishing to comment virtually shall email the comments@berkslibraries.org email address, which will accept virtual public comments until the public comment period is closed.
 - b. Comments must include first name, last name, and library name or municipality name.
 - c. Any comments without name and library name or municipality name will not be considered.
 - d. The Chair may rule out of order and decline to read any public comment which is profane, scandalous, impertinent, irrelevant, or redundant or comments for which the discernible purpose or effect of is to disrupt or needlessly protract the proceedings of the meeting.
 - e. Comment length is dictated by limitations of the platform being used (Microsoft Teams).
3. Meetings conducted in a hybrid format that gives speakers the option to comment in person and via a virtual format shall follow the above listed guidelines. Comments from speakers attending in person shall be accepted first and limited to three minutes per comment. Once all in-person comments are received, comments received by a virtual format shall be read aloud by the Board.
 4. The Board is not required to respond to public comments during the meeting but may choose to do so at their discretion. The public is reminded that this a public comment opportunity and not an interactive dialog with the Board. Said time limitations may be altered or waived at the Chair's discretion.
 5. Time allocated for the all public comment period at each meeting shall not exceed thirty (30) minutes. Each in-person speaker will be allotted three (3) minutes to present his or her topic. Time limits will be monitored, and County staff or the Advisory Board will respectfully request speakers to conclude their comments if the speaker goes beyond the time allotted.

Adopted by BCPL Advisory Board August 21, 2024