

AMENDED RULES OF PROCEDURE, CONDUCT AND DECORUM  
AT MEETINGS OF THE  
ELLIS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' COURT

- I. All Regular, Special, Emergency and Executive Session Meetings of the Ellis County Commissioners' Court will be called and conducted in accordance with the provisions of the Texas Open Meetings Act, Chapter 551, Government Code.
- II. Regular, Special, and Emergency Meetings of the Ellis County Commissioners' Court are open to the public and to representatives of the media. Executive Sessions of the Commissioners' Court are not open to the public or the media and only those individuals expressly requested or ordered to be present are allowed to attend Executive Session.
- III. The Ellis County Commissioners' Court meets in Regular Session according to a calendar set by a vote of the Court prior to the beginning of each County fiscal year. In order for a matter of issue to appear as an agenda item of any Regular Meeting of the Commissioners' Court, a request must be approved by at least one member of the Commissioners' Court and filed with the County Judge's office by 12:00 noon on the Wednesday immediately preceding the next Regular Meeting of the Commissioners' Court. Any members of the public seeking to have an item placed on the Court's agenda must seek the approval of their Precinct Commissioner or the County Judge. If the item is approved and made part of a Commissioners' Court agenda, submitting a Participation Form to the County Clerk, prior to the commencement of the Commissioners' Court meeting, ensures that member's right to be heard.
- IV. The business of Ellis County is conducted by and between the members of the Ellis County Commissioners' Court and by those members of the County staff, elected officials, department heads, consultants, experts and/or members of the public requested to be present and participate. While the public is invited to attend all meetings of the Commissioners' Court (except Executive Sessions) the public's participation therein is limited to that of observers unless a member (or members) of the public completes an Ellis County Commissioners Court Participation Form and submits same to the County Clerk at least ten (10) minutes prior to the commencement of the meeting. A sample of the Ellis County Commissioners' Court Participation Form is attached hereto as Exhibit "A." Additionally, the Presiding Officer may, at his/her discretion, request that a member (or members) of the public address the Court on a particular issue.
  - a. Each member of the public who appears before the Commissioners' Court shall be limited to a maximum of three (3) minutes to make his/her remarks. Time for each speaker shall be maintained by the County Clerk or such other designated representative of the Commissioners' Court. The member of the public who completes the Participation Form may elect to speak, to waive his/her time, or to yield two (2) minutes of that time to another individual who has signed up to

speak. No one person may speak for more than seven (7) minutes. Maximum discussion time on any agenda item may be extended or limited as deemed necessary by the Presiding Officer in order to advance the business of the Court.

- b. It is the intention of the Court to provide an open access to the citizens of Ellis County to address the Commissioners' Court and express themselves on issues of County Government. Members of the public are reminded that the Ellis County Commissioners' Court is a Constitutional Court, with both judicial and legislative powers, created under Article V, Section 1 and Section 18 of the Texas Constitution. As a Constitutional Court, the Ellis County Commissioners' Court also possesses the power to issue a Contempt of Court Citation under Section 81.023 of the Texas Local Government Code. Accordingly, members of the public in attendance at any Regular, Special and/or Emergency Meeting or Workshop of the Court shall conduct themselves with proper respect and decorum in speaking to and/or addressing the Court and in all actions in the presence of the Court.
  - c. Proper attire (this includes clothing and shoes) for men, women, and children is mandatory. Those members of the public who are inappropriately attired and/or who do not conduct themselves in an orderly and appropriate manner will be ordered to leave the meeting. Cellular telephones and pagers must be placed on silent or vibrate while the Court is in session. Refusal to abide by the Court's Order and/or continued disruption of the meeting may result in a Contempt of Court citation.
  - d. It is not the intention of the Ellis County Commissioners' Court to provide a public forum for the demeaning of any individual or group. Neither is it the intention of the Court to allow a member (or members) of the public to insult the honesty and/or integrity of the Court as a body, or any member or members of the Court, individually or collectively. Accordingly, profane, threatening, loud, belittling, insulting or vulgar language, actions or gestures directed toward the Court and/or any person in the Court's presence and/or racial, ethnic, or gender slurs or epithets will not be tolerated. No outbursts will be allowed in the courtroom. Violation of these rules may result in the following sanctions:
    - i. Cancellation of a speaker's remaining time;
    - ii. Removal from the Commissioners' Courtroom
    - iii. A Contempt Citation; and/or
    - iv. Such other civil and/or criminal sanctions as may be authorized under the Constitution, Statutes and Codes of the State of Texas.
- V. The County Judge is the Presiding Officer of the Ellis County Commissioners' Court and is a fully participating member thereof. Every two years, the Court shall by a majority vote elect a member of the Court to serve as the Judge Pro-Tem of the Court and in the event of the absence of the County Judge, the Judge Pro-Tem shall serve as the Presiding Officer of the Court.
- VI. The County Judge (or the designated Judge Pro-Tem of the Commissioners' Court), as Presiding Officer of the Commissioners' Court, is responsible for conducting all meetings. Ellis County Commissioners' Court business will be conducted according

to the posted agenda. In order to promote timely consideration of the substance of the Commissioners' Court meeting, agenda items requiring action by the Court will be advanced by a motion, a second and a vote of the Court.

- VII. Members of the public who have properly completed a Participation Form and submitted same to the County Clerk must wait to be recognized before they will be allowed to address the Court.
- VIII. Members of the media are welcome in open meetings of the Commissioners' Court but must conduct themselves in a manner that does not interfere with the Court's proceedings or with the ability of the public to participate in the Court's proceedings.
- IX. The Sheriff of Ellis County, Texas, or his designated deputy, shall serve as the Bailiff at all Regular, Special and Emergency Meetings of the Court.
- X. From time to time, the Commissioners' Court shall conduct town meetings and public hearings. These rules of procedure, conduct, and decorum shall also apply to such town meetings and public hearings, however, the Commissioners' Court may adopt such additional and supplemental rules for such meetings as may be necessary and appropriate to conduct such meetings in an orderly, efficient and proper manner.
- XI. These Rules of Procedure, Conduct and Decorum at Meetings of the Ellis County Commissioners' Court shall be effective immediately upon adoption by the Court and shall remain in full force and effect immediately upon adoption by the Court and shall remain in full force and effect until amended or repealed by a majority vote of the Commissioners' Court.

ADOPTED BY THE VOTE OF THE UNDERSIGNED MEMBERS OF THE ELLIS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' COURT ON THIS THE 10<sup>TH</sup> DAY OF DECEMBER, 2012.

  
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Carol Bush, County Judge

  
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Dennis Robinson, Commissioner Precinct 1

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Bill Dodson, Commissioner Precinct 2

  
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Heath Sims, Commissioner Precinct 3

  
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Ron Brown, Commissioner Precinct 4

Attest:   
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Cindy Polley, County Clerk

