

STATE OF TEXAS §
 §
COUNTY OF WILLIAMSON §

**ORDER SETTING
RULES OF PROCEDURE, CONDUCT, AND DECORUM
AT MEETINGS OF THE
OF COMMISSIONERS COURT
OF WILLIAMSON COUNTY, TEXAS**

Pursuant to the Laws and Rules of the State of Texas, the Texas Constitution, article V, § 18 (providing that commissioners court shall “exercise such powers and jurisdiction over all county business”), the Texas Local Government Code, §§ 81.022 & 81.023 (setting forth process and contempt powers of the commissioners court “for the proper execution of its powers and duties and enforcement of its jurisdiction”), the Texas Health and Safety Code, § 121.003(a) (authorizing commissioners court to “enforce any law that is reasonably necessary to protect the public health”), and the common law granting the County authority to regulate facilities and the public health and safety, the Commissioners Court of Williamson County finds that it is necessary to impose reasonable policies pertaining to meetings of the Williamson County Commissioners Court.

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED THAT the following policies for the enforcement of Rules of Procedure, Conduct, and Decorum at Meetings of the Williamson County Commissioners Court (hereinafter also referred to as the “Court” or “Commissioners Court”) are hereby adopted:

- I. All Regular, Special, Emergency, and Executive Session Meetings of the Williamson County Commissioners Court will be called and conducted in accordance with the provisions of the Texas Open Meeting Act, Texas Government Code, Chapter 551.
- II. The Williamson County Commissioners Court normally meets on Tuesdays at 9:30 a. m. in the Commissioners Courtroom on the second floor of Williamson County Courthouse, 710 Main Street, Georgetown, Texas. Unless otherwise amended or provided by the Williamson County Commissioners Court, the Regular Term or Regular Meeting day of the week of the Williamson County Commissioners Court shall be each Tuesday of every month and all other meetings or sessions of Commissioners Court shall be Special Terms or Special Meetings. **Tex. Loc. Gov't Code § 81.005(g)-(h)**. Each meeting notice will be approved by the County Judge and posted at the Williamson County Courthouse and on https://agenda.wilco.org/agenda_publish.cfm pursuant to the procedures listed in the Texas Open Meetings Act, Texas Government Code, Chapter 551.
- III. With the exception of executive sessions (aka, "closed meetings"), all meetings of the Williamson 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 media and only individuals requested or ordered to attend are allowed to attend.
- IV. The business of Williamson County is conducted by and between the members of the Williamson 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 open meetings of the Commissioners Court, participation is limited to that of observer unless a member(s) of the public is requested to address the Commissioners Court on an issue(s) or unless a Public Participation Form has been completed and submitted to the Administrative Assistant or designated staff prior to Court. However, the Commissioners Court may only discuss issues that are properly posted on the agenda.
 - 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. The Administrative Assistant or such other designated representative of the Commissioners Court shall maintain time for each speaker.
 - B. Maximum overall discussion on any agenda item, regardless of the number of members of the public wishing to address the Court shall be limited to forty-five (45) minutes. However, the Court reserves its discretion to allow additional time and speakers for matters of exceptional public interest. If a

member of the Court objects to additional overall time and speakers, a vote will be taken.

- C. **While it is the intention of the Court to provide open access to citizens of Williamson County, members of the public are advised that the Court is a Constitutional Court with both judicial and legislative powers, created under Article V, § 1 & § 18 of the Texas Constitution. As a Constitutional Court, the Williamson County Commissioners Court possesses the power to issue a Contempt of Court Citation under Tex. Loc. Gov't Code § 81.023. Any member of the public shall conduct themselves with proper respect in speaking before the Court. Proper attire is mandatory when appearing before the Court. Any member of the public who does not conduct themselves according to these guidelines will be ordered to leave the meeting. Refusal to abide by the Court's Order and/or continued disruption of the meeting may result in a Contempt of Court citation. The County Judge, or presiding officer over a meeting, may order loss of speaking privileges for the remainder of the current month or for a period of thirty (30) days for any person who violates these rules of decorum.**
- D. The Williamson County Commissioners Court is not a forum to publicly demean any group or individual. Accordingly, the Court will not allow a member of the public to question the integrity of the Court or its members. Any profane, insulting, or threatening language 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. Proper attire for men, women and children is mandatory. Inappropriate attire includes, but is not limited to, items such as cutoffs, tank tops, shorts, suggestive or offensive t-shirts. Those members of the public who are inappropriately attired or who do not conduct themselves in an orderly and appropriate manner will be ordered to leave the meeting until such time as they comply with the Court's directive. Violation of these rules may result in the following sanctions:
1. cancellation of a speaker's remaining time;
 2. removal from the Commissioners Courtroom;
 3. a Contempt Citation; and/or
 4. 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 Williamson County Commissioners Court and is a fully participating member thereof. As presiding officer of the Court, the County Judge is responsible for conducting all meetings. In the event of absence of the County Judge, the senior member of the Court present (in terms of total number of years as an elected member of the Court) shall

serve as the Judge Pro-Tem, although such senior member may delegate this duty to another member of the Court. Except as otherwise authorized by the Williamson County Commissioners Court, the County Judge shall be the presumptive signatory of the Williamson County Commissioners Court and, in the County Judge's absence, the senior member of the Court present (in terms of total number of years as an elected member of the Court) shall act as the presumptive signatory of the Williamson County Commissioners Court.

- VI. The Sheriff of Williamson County, Texas, or his designated deputy, shall serve as the Bailiff at all Regular, Special, and Emergency Meeting of the Court. In the event of the absence of the Sheriff or a conflict of interest the Court shall appoint such other commissioned peace officers to serve as Bailiff as may be necessary.
- VII. At the discretion of the Court, town meetings and public hearings may be conducted. The above rules of procedure, conduct and decorum shall apply to such meetings. Supplemental rules may be adopted at the discretion of the Commissioners Court in order to conduct such meetings in an orderly, efficient, and proper manner. The Court will enforce the laws and rules of the State of Texas as applicable, including but not limited to:

Tex. Penal Code § 38.13 (“Hindering Proceedings By Disorderly Conduct”).

(a) A person commits an offense if he *intentionally* hinders an official proceeding by noise or violent or tumultuous behavior or disturbance.

(b) A person commits an offense if he *recklessly* hinders an official proceeding by noise or violent or tumultuous behavior or disturbance and continues after explicit official request to desist.

(c) An offense under this section is a Class A misdemeanor.

Tex. Penal Code § 38.13 (emphasis added).

- VIII. The Williamson County Commissioners Court recognizes the concept of "ceremonial deism" as a reasonable usage in compliance with constitutional principles on the grounds that the practice is longstanding, has historical significance, and its religious impact is minimal and nonsectarian. Williamson County does not endorse or advance any one, or disparage any other, faith or belief. In line with local customs, history, morals, and application of ceremonial deism, Williamson County fully recognizes legislative prayer, use of “In God We Trust” as the national motto, use of the words “under God” to pledges of

allegiance, legislative resolutions honoring local churches, groups, and charitable organizations that contribute to the public good, and any other acceptable use of ceremonial deism without establishing or endorsing any one religion or violating the free will of the people with regard to their individual beliefs.

IX. Special Press & Media Rules:

- A. No media personnel or equipment, including lights, cameras or microphones will be located on the Commissioners Court bench nor closer than five (5) feet in front of the Commissioners Court bench during meetings.
- B. Reporters and media technicians are required to structure their movements, equipment (including set-up, take-down, and adjustments, etc.) in a manner that does not disrupt deliberations or the ability of the public to see, hear, and participate in the proceedings.
- C. Interviews shall not be conducted inside the Commissioners Courtroom during the time the Court is in session.
- D. Media interviews which are conducted outside the Commissioners Courtroom must be conducted in a manner that the interview does not disturb, impede or disrupt the Court's proceedings at any time.

X. **ACCESSIBILITY STATEMENT FOR DISABLED PERSONS:** The Court's meeting site is accessible to disabled persons as follows: Entrance to the Courthouse is accessible through the south entrance of the Williamson County Courthouse. A wheelchair ramp provides access to the south entrance. The Commissioners Courtroom is on the second floor, and there is a working elevator in the building. If any special assistance or accommodations are needed in order to attend a Commissioners Court meeting, please contact the Office of the County Judge at (512) 943-1550, in advance so that *reasonable* accommodations can be arranged.

XI. These Rules of Procedure, Conduct, and Decorum at Meetings of the Williamson County Commissioners Court shall be effective 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.

ORDERED BY THE WILLIAMSON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS on this

_____ day of _____, 201__.

Dan A. Gattis, Williamson County Judge

Lisa Birkman
Commissioner, Pct. 1

Valerie Covey
Commissioner, Pct. 3

Cynthia Long
Commissioner, Pct. 2

Ron Morrison
Commissioner, Pct. 4