

# **SPACE FLORIDA**

## **Public Comment and Conduct of Meetings Policy**

**Effective Date:** October 1, 2013 (Approved by the Board of Directors on October 30, 2013)

**Objective:** **The objective of this policy is to establish standard procedures to ensure an opportunity for broad public participation in decision-making.**

**Policy Statement:** It is the intent of this policy that the deliberations and actions of the Board of Directors of Space Florida and Space Florida committees be conducted and taken openly in order that the public and relevant stakeholders may be fully informed and intelligently advised as to the conduct of Space Florida public business.

**Definitions:** For the purpose of this policy, the following definitions shall prevail:

1. A “meeting” is a gathering of a quorum of the membership of the Board of Directors, or any board or commission of Space Florida for the purpose of receiving information relating to public business, or for discussion of public business, or for official action upon a proposition related to public business.
2. A “regular meeting” is a meeting held pursuant to a schedule of such meetings as approved by a board or commission to conduct public business or otherwise discuss or act upon matters of public interest.
3. A “special meeting” is any meeting other than a regular meeting held by a board or commission. A “special meeting” is held for the purpose of addressing matters requiring the immediate attention of a board or commission or for the purpose of addressing matters which the board or commission has determined are best addressed at a special meeting. When a special meeting is called, the presiding officer of the board or commission shall specifically state the purpose of the meeting and the board or commission shall address only those matters for which the meeting was called.
4. A “board or commission” shall refer to the Board of Directors of Space Florida and any other board or commission now existing or created in the future by the Board of Directors or Space Florida.
5. The “presiding officer” shall mean, in the case of the Board of the Directors the chair and in all other cases shall be the chair of a particular Space Florida board or commission.
6. “Board of Directors” shall refer to the Board of Directors of Space Florida.

## **Meetings:**

1. **Location.** All meetings of the Board of Directors and any other board or commission shall be held in a suitable location and shall be open to the public as required by law. Meetings may be conducted by means of communications media technology. The only exception to the requirement that meetings be open to the public shall be an executive session scheduled for those purposes expressly recognized by law.
2. **Regular Meetings.** The Board of Directors and the other boards and commissions shall hold regular quarterly meetings as designated by the Board of Directors or the other boards and commissions.
3. **Public Notice.** Space Florida shall give public notice of the schedule of meetings and shall state the dates, times, and places or teleconference numbers, if applicable, for such meetings. Public notice of any special meeting or of any reconvened meeting shall be given before such meeting. Public notice shall be given by posting a copy of the notice on Space Florida's website and in the Florida Administrative Register.

## **Conduct of Meetings:**

1. The presiding officer shall preserve order and decorum at all meetings.
2. When considering matters upon which the board or commission will take action the presiding officer shall receive comments from the public.
3. During any board or commission meeting, board and commission members shall maintain order and decorum.
4. Space Florida staff and citizens must be recognized by the presiding officer before speaking or asking questions.
5. All comments must be made from the podium which is located in the Space Florida meeting room or by other reasonable accommodations in any other location in which a board or commission meeting is held, and shall address the subject of the agenda item. Individuals that appear before any board or commission are required to state their legal name for the public record. The purpose of this requirement is so that they are properly reflected in any board or commission minutes and are available for future reference.
6. As a board or commission considers consent agenda items, emergency items, items involving official acts that involve no more than a ministerial act, approval of minutes, ceremonial proclamations and other similar items, the presiding officer may, at his/her discretion, or at the direction of a majority of the board or commission, accept comments from those in attendance.

**Public Participation and Comment:** In order to comply with Section 286.0114 of the Florida Statutes, Space Florida hereby establishes a Public Comment Policy applicable to all boards and

commissions to allow members of the public an opportunity to address boards and commissions. In addition to public hearings, a special time is hereby set aside at all board and commission meetings for the purpose of receiving comments and suggestions from members of the public. All comments made during any Public Comment period shall be subject to the following procedures:

1. Space Florida allocates a reasonable period of time at the beginning of each board or commission meeting for public comments. The presiding officer will divide the time equally between all who have signed up to speak; but in no case may a person speak longer than three minutes. The presiding officer may permit additional time to a given speaker on a case-by-case basis.
2. For board or committee meetings held at a physical location, persons who wish to make a statement during the Public Comment period will register on a sign-up sheet which will be available 30 minutes before the start of the meeting. No one will be allowed to have his or her name placed on the list by telephone or e-mail request to Space Florida staff. Each person who signed up to speak will have up to three minutes to make his or her statement. Speakers will be acknowledged by the presiding officer in the order in which their names appear on the sign-up sheet. Speakers shall address that board or commission from the podium, and not approach that board or commission or Space Florida staff. Speakers will begin their statement by first stating their legal name.
3. For board or committee meetings that are conducted by means of communications media technology, a teleconference number will be provided on the meeting agenda. Persons who wish to make a statement during the Public Comment period will call-in during the Public Comment period and will be acknowledged during that period of time. Each person who calls in during the Public Comment period will have up to three minutes to make his or her statement.
4. Statements are to be directed to the board or commission as a whole, and not to individuals. Public comment is not intended to require a board or commission to provide an answer to the speaker. Discussions between speakers and members of the audience will not be allowed.
5. Speakers will be courteous in their language and presentation.
6. Only one speaker will be acknowledged at a time. In the event a group of persons supporting or opposing the same position desires to be heard, in the interest of time, a spokesperson shall be designated to express the group's concerns. Likewise, in the event the number of persons wishing to attend the hearing exceeds the capacity of the meeting place, one or more delegates shall be selected to speak on behalf of each group. If the time period expires before all persons who have signed up get to speak, those names will be carried over to the next Public Comment period, or if the presiding officer consents, these comments can be heard at that meeting.

7. Any action on items brought up during the Public Comment period will be at the discretion of that board or commission.
8. These same rules shall apply to all boards and commissions.

**Decorum:** The presiding officer shall preserve strict order and decorum at all meetings.

1. In conducting business, boards and commissions are committed to the principles of civility, honor, and dignity. Individuals appearing before boards and commission are requested to observe the same principles when making comments on items and issues presented to a given board or commission for its consideration.
2. Staff members and citizens are required to use proper language when addressing a board or commission or the audience. Staff members and citizens shall not use profanity or cursing, aggressive or threatening behavior when addressing the board or commission or other participants. All comments are directed to the presiding officer and not to individual members of the board or commission or to the audience. No personal verbal attacks toward any individual will be allowed during the conduct of a board or commission meeting. The presiding officer may have individual(s) removed from the podium and/or meeting chambers if such conduct persists after a warning has been issued.
3. All members of a board or commission shall accord the utmost courtesy to each other, staff, and the public members appearing before the board or commission and shall refrain at all times from rude and derogatory remarks, reflections as to integrity, abusive comments and statements as to motives and personalities. During board or commission meetings, cell phones are to be turned off or silenced. Use of cell phones by board or commission members and staff for talking, texting, emailing or otherwise will not be allowed during meetings while at the dais, except for emergency communications, research, or during breaks.

**Waiver of Rules:** The board or commission may, at any time, waive all or a portion of these rules of procedure during the course of a meeting.

**Training:** Periodic training for Sunshine Law requirements will be scheduled by Space Florida for board and commission members.