



## **Guidelines for Public Comment at Public Meetings**

### **I. Purpose**

The Board of Trustees of the Fort Worth Employees' Retirement Fund (the "Board") is committed to providing the opportunity for orderly, appropriate, and effective public comment. These Guidelines are provided to ensure a fair and respectful process.

### **II. General**

- A. Speakers may address the Board at a regularly scheduled Board meeting on (1) any posted agenda item when the item is called for consideration or (2) any matter related to Fund business or affairs that is within the scope, authority, and legislative functions of the Fund but is not related to a posted agenda item during the agenda item entitled Public Comment. The Board Chairperson shall have the discretion to call for any public comment to be heard earlier in the meeting other than during the agenda item to which it relates. Except when a speaker is recognized by the Board Chairperson, the audience shall not enter into discussion or debate on matters being considered by the Board. Individuals who do not follow this procedure or otherwise disrupt the Board's meeting may be asked to leave the meeting.
- B. In order to provide comments to the Board during a Board meeting, a person must be recognized to do so by the Board Chairperson.
- C. Public comments must relate to matters over which the Board has jurisdiction.
- D. Regarding proposed public comment involving a member's specific complaint as to his or her participation in the Fund (such as a complaint involving benefits owed to the member or the rights of a member under the Fund), the Board Chairperson will determine whether a speaker addressing the Board has attempted to solve a matter administratively through normal resolution channels. If not, the Board Chairperson shall refer the speaker to the Executive Director to seek resolution. If the matter cannot be resolved through normal resolution channels, the Executive Director will refer the matter to the Executive Committee.
- E. Texas law prohibits the Board from discussing or acting on the public comment or complaint if the subject is not on the posted agenda.

### III. Guidelines

- A. Any speaker who wishes to make a public comment during a Board meeting must be present in the Board meeting room when called upon by the Board Chairperson to speak. No person will be permitted to address the Board unless that person has registered, as prescribed by these Guidelines. All speaker registrations must be completed no later than fifteen (15) minutes before the start of the meeting (i.e. 8:45 a.m. for meetings beginning at 9:00 a.m.). A request for language or sign interpretive services must be made forty-eight (48) hours in advance of a meeting by contacting the Retirement Office, by telephone or in person.
- B. Persons who desire to speak at a Board meeting must complete the required registration for each public comment item by providing the following information:
1. Speaker's name and address;
  2. The name of the person or group, if any, the speaker is representing;
  3. The agenda item(s) upon which the person wishes to speak, if any; and
  4. If a matter does not relate to an agenda item, a brief description of the nature of the matter to be addressed by the speaker.
  5. If the Board Chairperson determines based on the information provided that public comment is made for the purpose of soliciting Fund business and that the particular solicitation is not specifically identified on the agenda, the Board Chairperson may deny the opportunity to deliver the comment.
- C. When a posted agenda item is taken up for consideration by the Board or the Board Chairperson otherwise calls for public comment on an agenda item, the Board Chairperson will recognize each individual that has registered to speak on that item by calling the person's name. After being recognized, the person shall advance to the podium and state his or her name and city of residence in an audible tone for the record and shall limit his or her remarks to the topic under discussion.

A person desiring to speak shall address the Board Chairperson and the Board, not the audience or the Fund staff. Each speaker shall be limited to three (3) minutes per agenda item, up to a maximum of nine (9) minutes total for all agenda items. Each speaker who requires the assistance of a translator to address the Board Chairperson and the Board shall be limited to six (6) minutes per agenda item, up to a maximum of eighteen (18) minutes total for all agenda items.

At the discretion of the Board Chairperson, this time limit may be extended. Each speaker who requires the assistance of a translator to address the Board Chairperson and the Board shall be given twice the amount of time given to a member of the public that does not require a translator.

No person other than a Board member or the person having the floor will be permitted to enter into the discussion directly with a member of the Board without the permission of the Board Chairperson. All questions to the Board shall be directed to the Board Chairperson.

- D. Persons wishing to address the Board about an item that is not otherwise posted on the Board agenda and who have registered will be permitted to speak under the agenda item entitled Public Comment. The Board Chairperson shall have the discretion to call for all or a portion of the Public Comment agenda item to be heard earlier in the meeting other than in the order such item is otherwise posted on the agenda. The procedural and timing requirements in Section III.C. also apply to this Section III.D.
- E. Presentation by a representative of an organized group consisting of a minimum of five (5) persons, all of whom must be present in the Board room at the time such representative is called upon by the Board Chairperson, shall be limited to six (6) minutes per agenda item, up to a maximum of eighteen (18) minutes total for all agenda items. If an organized group of speakers wishes to address the Board on the same topic(s), the group must designate not more than two (2) spokespersons, who are limited to the total minutes allowed for the group described above, divided at their discretion. At the discretion of the Board Chairperson, this limit may be extended. A person counted as an individual represented by the speaker shall not be permitted to speak individually on the same subject. Each speaker who requires the assistance of a translator to address the Board shall be given twice the amount of time given to a member of the public who does not require a translator.
- F. Visual aids, such as signs, banners, placards, PowerPoint or other projections, are not permitted during public comment. However, handouts are permitted. If a speaker chooses to provide handouts, he or she is required to bring eighteen (18) copies. The Board requests that the handouts not contain any statements, graphics, or pictures that are profane or reflect slanderous remarks or personal attacks.
- G. Responses to public comments by the Board and Fund staff must be in accordance with the Texas Open Meetings Act requirements. If a subject is raised in public comment that has not been included in the Board meeting agenda, responses may only consist of a statement of specific factual information or a recitation of existing policy. Any further discussion of the subject is limited to a proposal to place the subject on the agenda for a future meeting for deliberation or decision.

H. The Board requests that speakers refrain from profanity, personal attacks, or slanderous remarks.

**IV. Periodic Review**

The Board retains the right at any time to revisit the effectiveness of the public comment process and modify these guidelines at its sole discretion within the provisions of the Texas Open Meetings Act.

These Guidelines were revised and adopted by the Board of Trustees on June 24, 2020.