

STEPHENS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT

Rules of Procedure, Conduct, and Decorum



Section 1: Purpose and Authority

These Rules govern the meetings of the Stephens County Commissioners' Court (the "Court") to ensure orderly, transparent, and lawful proceedings.

The Court is a Constitutional Court established under Article V, Sections 1 and 18 of the Texas Constitution. It possesses both legislative and judicial authority, including the authority to enforce order and issue contempt citations pursuant to Section 81.023 of the Texas Local Government Code. All meetings shall comply with the Texas Open Meetings Act (Chapter 551, Texas Government Code) and all other applicable law.

Section 2: Types of Meetings

The Court conducts its business through the following types of meetings, each described in the sections that follow:

- **Regular Meetings** (Section 3) — open to the public and the media.
- **Special Meetings** (Section 4), including public hearings, workshops, and town meetings — open to the public and the media.
- **Emergency Meetings** (Section 5) — open to the public and the media.
- **Executive Sessions** (Section 6) — closed to the public and limited to persons authorized or invited by the Court, as permitted by law.

Except for Executive Sessions and as otherwise authorized by law, all meetings are open to the public and the media. The following table is a quick reference to the public-participation limits detailed in Sections 9 and 10. In the event of any conflict, the text of those Sections controls.

Type of Comment	Max. Speakers	Time Each	Total Time	Balanced Participation
Non-agenda items (§9.B)	Six (6)	3 minutes	Not fixed	Does not apply
Agenda items (§9.C)	Ten (10)	3 minutes	Up to 30 minutes	Applies (§10)
Public hearings (§9.D)	As time allows	Up to 5 minutes	60 minutes	Applies (§10)

Section 3: Regular Meetings

The Court typically meets in Regular Session on the second and fourth Mondays of each month, but dates and times may be adjusted or rescheduled as needed due to holidays, scheduling conflicts, or other necessities. In any case, the following remains true:

- Notice shall be provided as required by the Texas Open Meetings Act.
- To place an item on the agenda, a request must be submitted to and approved by the County Judge or a member of the Court no later than 12:00 p.m. on Monday one week prior to the meeting, subject to statutory posting requirements.
- The County Judge or designee shall prepare and post the agenda as required by law.

Section 4: Special Meetings

Special Meetings are called for a particular purpose and take one of the following forms.

Public Hearings

Public hearings are formal proceedings on a single, specific topic — such as the budget, tax rate, permits, or land-use matters. Members of the public are given a structured opportunity to present testimony, evidence, or opinions on a specific proposed action before the Court makes a decision. The hearing creates an official record of public input that the Court considers — and is sometimes required to consider — before voting. The Court typically deliberates and votes at the close of the hearing or takes the matter under advisement for a later meeting. Notice under the Texas Open Meetings Act is required. Procedures for public participation in a hearing are set out in Section 9(D).

Workshops

A commissioner workshop (also called a work session or study session) is an informal meeting in which the Court discusses issues in depth without taking formal action.

STEPHENS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT

Rules of Procedure, Conduct, and Decorum



- The purpose is discussion and information-gathering, not decision-making. The Court may receive briefings from staff or consultants, review proposals in detail, ask questions, and discuss differing views before a matter is formally placed on a regular agenda.
- No votes or binding decisions are made, although the Court may reach an informal consensus on direction. Any formal vote may occur only at a regular meeting.
- Workshops are public meetings subject to the Texas Open Meetings Act.
- Public comment may be limited or not offered, as the purpose of a workshop is the Court's own deliberation rather than the gathering of public input.

Town Meetings

A town meeting is convened by the Court for informational purposes or interactive dialogue with the community on matters of public interest. A town meeting does not constitute a formal proceeding for the transaction of County business unless properly posted as such.

- Notice must be given under the Texas Open Meetings Act.
- Time limits and any special decorum requirements shall be set and published with the meeting announcement.

Section 5: Emergency Meetings

An emergency meeting is convened to address an urgent matter that requires the Court's immediate attention and cannot reasonably wait for the notice period of a regular or special meeting. Under the Texas Open Meetings Act, an emergency exists only when there is an imminent threat to public health or safety, or a reasonably unforeseeable situation requiring immediate action. The following apply:

- Notice of the emergency meeting (or of an emergency item added to an existing agenda) must still be posted, but the Act allows a shortened posting period of no less than one (1) hour before the meeting, rather than the standard notice period required for regular meetings.
- The notice must clearly describe the emergency or the urgent public necessity that justifies the shortened posting.
- Only the specific emergency matter and items directly related to it may be considered; routine business may not be conducted under emergency posting.
- The Court may take formal action at an emergency meeting, as it would at a regular meeting.

Section 6: Executive Sessions

Executive Sessions are closed meetings limited to the members of the Court and to persons the Court authorizes or invites to attend. The Court may meet in Executive Session only for purposes expressly permitted by the Texas Open Meetings Act, such as consultation with its attorney, deliberations regarding real property, personnel matters, or security matters.

- The Court must first convene in an open meeting and announce that it is going into Executive Session, citing the applicable provision of the Act.
- No final action, decision, or vote may be taken in Executive Session; any formal action must be taken in an open meeting.
- The matters discussed are confidential to the extent provided by law.

Section 7: Procedural Process: How do Commissioners Make Decisions

The County Judge presides and serves as a full voting member of the Court. If the Judge is absent, the most senior Commissioner present — as determined by total years served as an elected official — shall serve as Judge Pro Tempore and may delegate that role.

The presiding officer shall maintain order, recognize speakers, and enforce these Rules. No person may address the Court without first being recognized.

The Court will follow the procedures in Attachment B for Considering and Acting on Agenda Items.

STEPHENS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT

Rules of Procedure, Conduct, and Decorum



Section 8: Conduct and Decorum

All attendees shall conduct themselves in a respectful and orderly manner. The following are prohibited:

- Disruptive behavior.
- Profane, insulting, threatening, or demeaning language. The Court does not intend to provide a forum for demeaning individuals or groups, or for impugning the honesty or integrity of the Court.
- Personal attacks against individuals or the Court.
- Racial, ethnic, or gender-based slurs.
- Inappropriate attire.

These Rules do not prohibit lawful criticism of the Court or its actions.

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. Refusal to abide by the Court's order, or continued disruption of the meeting, may result in a Contempt of Court citation.

Enforcement

Violations may result in:

- cancellation of speaking time;
- removal from the courtroom;
- issuance of a contempt citation; and/or
- such other civil or criminal sanctions as may be authorized under the Constitution, statutes, and codes of the State of Texas.

Section 9: Public Participation

The Court conducts the County's business with participation from county staff, elected officials, and invited parties. The public is encouraged to attend and to provide input through the procedures set out in this Section.

A. General Requirements

- Each speaker must submit a Public Participation Form (attached) before the meeting.
- Speakers requiring translators should request such 24 hours in advance; "Walk-in" requests that need aids will be honored to the extent possible
- Speakers requiring translation will receive twice the amount of time allowable
- Speakers must be recognized by the presiding officer before speaking.
- The presiding officer or designee shall keep time and notify each speaker of the time remaining.
- The presiding officer may decline or end comments that are unrelated to County business or to the item under consideration.
- The Court may extend, reduce, or modify the speaker and time limits in this Section by majority vote of the members present.

B. Non-Agenda Items

This subsection provides citizens an opportunity to address the Court on matters within its jurisdiction that do not appear on the agenda.

- Speakers are heard in the order in which their forms were received.
- Up to six (6) speakers may be heard, at three (3) minutes each, unless extended by majority vote.
- Consistent with law, the Court will not deliberate or act on non-agenda items.

C. Agenda Items

This subsection allows citizens to address the Court on specific agenda items.

- Each speaker has three (3) minutes. Up to ten (10) speakers will be heard per item, for a total of up to 30 minutes.
- Where the number of speakers exceeds the limit, the Balanced Participation procedure in Section 10 applies.

STEPHENS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT

Rules of Procedure, Conduct, and Decorum



D. Public Hearings

Public hearings are generally required by statute. They extend the allowance for public input and interaction with the Court, and the Court may engage the presenter in dialogue and ask clarifying questions.

- A public hearing is limited to 60 minutes total, with speaking time divided among registered speakers at a maximum of five (5) minutes per speaker.
- The Balanced Participation procedure in Section 10 applies if necessary.

Section 10: Balanced Participation

When public participation requests exceed the number of speakers or the time allowance provided for a given form of public engagement, available time will be divided equally between those in favor and those opposed.

- Speakers will be selected at random.
- Selection is made by separating the self-designated “for” and “against” Public Participation Forms, assigning each form a number, and drawing numbers one at a time, alternating between the “for” and “against” groups.
- A speaker may pass; if so, another speaker will be selected at random to take that turn.

Section 11: Media Guidelines

Media representatives may attend and report on proceedings, provided they do not disrupt the meeting.

- Equipment shall not be placed on the bench or within five (5) feet in front of it.
- Setup and movement shall minimize disruption.
- Interviews are not permitted in the courtroom during proceedings.
- Interviews conducted outside the courtroom shall not interfere with the meeting.

Section 12: Security and Bailiff

The Sheriff or a designated deputy shall serve as bailiff. If the Sheriff is unavailable or has a conflict, the Court shall appoint another commissioned peace officer.

Section 13: Effective Date and Amendments

These Rules of Procedure, Conduct and Decorum at Meetings of the Stephens 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. These Rules may be temporarily suspended by majority vote of the Court in a manner that does not conflict with the Texas Open Meetings Act.

Passed and approved by the Stephens County Commissioners' Court

on the 22 day of June, 2020.


William W. Thompson
Stephens County Judge


David Fambro
Commissioner, Precinct 1


Will Warren
Commissioner, Precinct 3


Mark McCullough
Commissioner, Precinct 2


Tanner Wade
Commissioner, Precinct 4

STEPHENS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT

Attachment A: Public Participation Form



This form must be completed and submitted to the County Commissioners' Clerk – in person at the County Judge/Commissioners' office, via email at commissioners@stephenscountytexas.gov, or on the day of the meeting - **prior to the start of the meeting** for any individual wishing to address the Court on an agenda item. Please fill out one form per agenda item.

Type of Comment	Max. Speakers	Time Each	Total Time	Balanced Participation
Non-agenda items (Sec 9B)	Six (6)	3 minutes	Not fixed	Does not apply
Agenda items (Sec 9C)	Ten (10)	3 minutes	Up to 30 minutes	Applies (Sec 10)
Public hearings (Sec 9D)	As time allows	Up to 5 minutes	60 minutes	Applies (Sec 10)

APPLICANT INFORMATION

Name: _____ Telephone: _____

Home Address (Street, City, St, Zip): _____

REPRESENTATION (If Applicable)

Are you representing a group or organization? ☐ YES ☐ NO

If yes, please provide the following:

Organization Name: _____ Telephone Number: _____

_____ I am requesting time to speak during the public comment period on a non-agenda item.

**Non-agenda comments must concern matters within the Court's jurisdiction.*

_____ I am requesting time to speak directly on an agenda item. Agenda Item # _____

☐ FOR ☐ AGAINST ☐ INFORMATIVE

_____ I am requesting time to speak during a designated public hearing period.

☐ FOR ☐ AGAINST ☐ INFORMATIVE

Please provide a summary of your comments here, or you may attach a copy of your full comments for the record.

SIGNATURE

I understand my comments are limited to three (3) minutes (or as modified by the Court) and to the rules established by the Stephens County Commissioners' Court.

Signature _____

Date _____

For office use:

Rec'd by (initial) _____

Date _____

Time _____

STEPHENS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT
*ATTACHMENT B: PROCEDURES FOR CONSIDERING AND
ACTING ON AGENDA ITEMS*



1. Purpose

This document establishes a simplified, practical framework for considering and acting on agenda items. The goal is a clear, efficient decision-making process — not strict parliamentary procedure. These rules are designed to reflect how this Court operates and supersede Robert's Rules of Order where they conflict. For matters not addressed here, the presiding officer's reasonable judgment governs.

2. Order of Consideration

Each agenda item is handled in the same order so that members and the public know what to expect and when they may participate.

- (a) **Opening the item.** The presiding officer — the County Judge or, in the Judge's absence, the Judge Pro Tempore — opens the agenda item and presents it for consideration. If a commissioner needs to recuse himself/herself from an item, it should be done so at this time. The commissioner should recuse from the discussion as well as the vote.
- (b) **Recognized public comment.** A member of the public who has timely submitted a Public Participation Form and wishes to speak on the item is recognized by the presiding officer and may address the Court in accordance with the Rules of Decorum.
- (c) **Discussion by the Court.** With the floor open, the members of the Court discuss the item.
- (d) **Motion and second.** After the discussion is complete, a Commissioner may make a motion, properly stated — for example, *"I move that the Court approve"* A formal motion requires a second from another Commissioner before it may proceed.
- (e) **Friendly amendments, Motions to Strike, etc.** Following the motion and second, other commissioners have options on how to handle the motion on the table. Only one main motion can be on the table at a time. (Sections 3)
- (f) **Restatement and vote.** Once the motion is seconded and any amendment or substitute has been disposed of, the presiding officer restates the final motion word for word, calls for the vote. The vote is recorded by roll call of each commissioner.
- (g) **The presiding officer announces the action motion.** The motion passes or carries or the motion fails.

2.1 Agenda compliance

Only motions within the scope of the posted agenda item may be made. The presiding officer should decline motions that fall outside the posted notice language.

STEPHENS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT
*ATTACHMENT B: PROCEDURES FOR CONSIDERING AND
ACTING ON AGENDA ITEMS*



3. Amendments, Motions, & Points

The following motions and points are available to the Court beyond the main motion process. They handle the routine management of meetings — recessing, tabling, ending debate, and correcting procedural issues in real time.

3.1 Friendly Amendments

During debate, any member may offer a friendly amendment — a modification to the motion that both the original movant and the member who seconded agree to accept. If both agree, the motion is updated in place without the formality of withdrawing and re-making the motion.

If either the movant or the seconder objects, the amendment does not take effect and debate continues on the original motion.

Procedure:

1. A member offers the amendment: "I would like to suggest a friendly amendment to..."
2. The presiding officer asks whether the movant and seconder both agree.
3. If both agree, the presiding officer restates the updated motion: "The motion is now amended to read... Debate continues."
4. If either declines, the presiding officer notes the amendment was not accepted and debate resumes on the original motion.

3.2 Motion to Strike

If a member believes the motion on the table cannot be salvaged through a friendly amendment, that member may move to strike the motion. A motion to strike requires a second. If seconded and approved by majority vote, the original motion is removed from the table entirely and the presiding officer invites a new main motion.

Procedure:

1. A member states: "I move to strike the motion."
2. The presiding officer calls for a second. Without a second, the motion to strike fails and debate on the original motion resumes.
3. If seconded, the presiding officer calls an immediate vote. The motion to strike is not debatable.
4. If the motion to strike passes: "The motion has been struck. The floor is open for a new motion."
5. If the motion to strike fails: "The motion to strike failed. We return to debate on the original motion" — the presiding officer restates the original motion.

STEPHENS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT
ATTACHMENT B: PROCEDURES FOR CONSIDERING AND
ACTING ON AGENDA ITEMS



3.3 Motions

Motion	Purpose	What to Say	Interrupt?	Second?	Debatable?	Vote
Motion to Adjourn	Ends the meeting entirely.	I move to adjourn.	No	Yes	No — vote immediately	Majority
Motion to Recess	Temporarily pauses the meeting. The Judge may also call a brief recess without a motion.	I move to recess for [time].	No	Yes	No — vote immediately	Majority
Motion to Table	Pauses consideration of the current motion. Best practice: include a time certain for the item to return.	I move to table this matter until [date/time/event].	No	Yes	No — vote immediately	Majority
Motion to Take from the Table	Resumes consideration of a tabled motion.	I move to take [matter] from the table.	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
Motion to Reconsider	Brings back a matter already voted on in the same meeting. May only be made by a member who voted with the majority.	I move to reconsider our action on [matter].	Yes	Yes	Only if original motion was debatable	Majority
Motion to End Debate	Closes discussion and forces an immediate vote. Should only be used after all members have had at least one opportunity to speak.	I move the previous question / I move we take a vote.	No	Yes	No — vote immediately	Majority

STEPHENS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT
ATTACHMENT B: PROCEDURES FOR CONSIDERING AND
ACTING ON AGENDA ITEMS



3.4 Points

Point	Purpose	What to Say	Interrupt?	Second?	Debatable?	Decided By
Point of Privilege	Addresses an urgent personal or physical issue affecting the member's ability to participate — noise, temperature, technical failure, health.	Point of privilege.	Yes	No	No	Judge decides
Point of Order	Signals that the meeting is being conducted improperly or a rule has been violated.	Point of order.	Yes	No	No	Judge decides
Point of Information	A request for a factual clarification — not a comment or argument.	Point of information.	Yes	No	No	None — Judge answers or directs
Appeal the Chair's Ruling	Challenges a procedural ruling made by the presiding officer. Any member may second; the body votes to uphold or overturn.	I appeal the Judge's ruling.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority

STEPHENS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT
*ATTACHMENT B: PROCEDURES FOR CONSIDERING AND
ACTING ON AGENDA ITEMS*



4. Calling the Vote

After debate is concluded, the presiding officer restates the motion in full before calling the vote. This ensures every member and the record are clear on exactly what is being decided. Each member has four voting options:

Aye	Vote to pass the motion
Nay	Vote to fail the motion
Abstain	Not voting
Recuse	Has a conflict of interest that requires the Commissioner or Judge from voting on the topic.

Vote procedure:

1. Presiding officer closes debate: "If there is no further discussion..."
2. Presiding officer restates the motion verbatim.
3. Vote is recorded by roll call: "Commissioner Smith?" Commissioner answers, "Aye/Nay/Abstain/Recuse."
4. Presiding officer announces the result by name and states the effect: "The motion carries by a vote of"

4.1 Silence Counts

Silence counts as an affirmative vote. Any member wishing to abstain must state their abstention on the record. The presiding officer should note abstentions by name in the announcement of results.

4.2 Majority required

A simple majority of members present carries a motion unless a supermajority is required by statute or these rules. The presiding officer is a full voting member and may vote on all questions.

Majority	A motion passes on a majority of the members present and voting.
Ties	A tie vote fails. With all five members present and voting, a yes-or-no motion cannot tie; a tie can occur only when a member is absent or abstains.
Abstentions	A member who abstains is counted as present but not voting. Abstentions must be stated verbally by the individual during roll call. The minutes note the abstention.
Conflicts of Interest	Where a member has a substantial interest in a matter as defined by Texas Local Government Code Chapter 171, the member must disclose the interest, file the affidavit required by law, and be recused from both discussion and the vote. (The County Attorney should confirm the applicable thresholds and affidavit requirements.)

These procedures are adopted as part of the Stephens County Rules of Procedure, Conduct, and Decorum and supersede Robert's Rules of Order where they conflict.

STEPHENS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT
ATTACHMENT B: PROCEDURES FOR CONSIDERING AND
ACTING ON AGENDA ITEMS



Quick Reference Guide

To accomplish this...	You say...	Interrupt?	Second?	Debatable?	Vote needed
MOTIONS					
End the meeting	I move to adjourn.	No	Yes	No	Majority
Take a break	I move to recess for [time].	No	Yes	No	Majority
Pause an item for later	I move to table this until [time/event].	No	Yes	No	Majority
Resume a tabled item	I move to take [item] from the table.	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
Stop debate and vote now	I move the previous question.	No	Yes	No	Majority
Make a main motion	I move that...	No	Yes	Yes	Majority
Modify the motion (by agreement)	Friendly amendment — I suggest a friendly amendment to...	No	Movant + Secunder agree	Yes	No vote needed
Kill the motion and start over	I move to strike the motion.	No	Yes	No	Majority
Revisit a vote from this meeting	I move to reconsider our action on...	Yes	Yes	Only if original was debatable	Majority
Go into / return from executive session	I move we go into / return from executive session.	No	Yes	Yes	Majority
POINTS (no motion required)					
Address urgent personal/physical issue	Point of privilege.	Yes	No	No	Judge decides
Flag a procedural violation	Point of order.	Yes	No	No	Judge decides
Request a factual clarification	Point of information.	Yes	No	No	Judge answers
Challenge the Judge's ruling	I appeal the Judge's ruling.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority

Color key:

Yes/Allowed

No / Not permitted

Conditional

Informational

STEPHENS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT
*ATTACHMENT B: PROCEDURES FOR CONSIDERING AND
ACTING ON AGENDA ITEMS*



Common Situations — What to Say

Make a motion: “I move that the Court [specific action].”

Suggest a friendly amendment: “I’d like to suggest a friendly amendment — that the motion be amended to [change].”

Strike the motion and start over: “I move to strike the motion.” (Requires a second and majority vote.)

Pause an item for later: “I move to table this matter until [date / after executive session / receipt of committee report].”

End debate and force a vote: “I move the previous question.” (Requires a second; not debatable.)

Call a recess: “I move to recess for [ten minutes / lunch / etc.].”

End the meeting: “I move to adjourn.”

Flag a procedural problem: “Point of order.” (No recognition needed; Judge rules.)

Ask for a factual clarification: “Point of information.” (No recognition needed.)

Address a noise / comfort issue: “Point of privilege.” (No recognition needed; Judge decides.)

Challenge the Judge’s ruling: “I appeal the Judge’s ruling.” (Requires a second; majority vote overturns.)

Revisit a vote from this meeting: “I move to reconsider our action on [matter].” (Must have voted with the majority to bring this.)

Adopted as Appendix A to the Stephens County Rules of Procedure, Conduct, and Decorum.