

CREEK COUNTY RURAL WATER DISTRICT NO. 1

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND MEETING CONDUCT POLICY

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy is to establish reasonable, uniform, and viewpoint-neutral procedures governing public attendance, public comment, recording of meetings, meeting decorum, written submissions, and related public participation in meetings of the Board of Directors of Creek County Rural Water District No. 1, Kellyville, Oklahoma, and, as specifically provided in Section 14, Annual and Special Meetings of Benefit Unit owners.

This Policy is intended to promote public access and meaningful public input while allowing the Board to conduct District business in an orderly, efficient, safe, and lawful manner.

2. AUTHORITY AND CONSTRUCTION

This Policy is adopted pursuant to the authority granted to the Board of Directors under Article 8, Section 1(c) of the District Bylaws to prescribe, adopt, and amend equitable and uniform rules and regulations for the conduct of the business and affairs of the District. The Chairperson shall administer this Policy as the presiding officer of the Board.

This Policy is a Board policy and procedure. It does not amend the District Bylaws and shall not be construed to limit any right granted to Benefit Unit owners under the Bylaws.

If any provision of this Policy conflicts with the Oklahoma Open Meeting Act, Oklahoma Open Records Act, District Bylaws, or other controlling law, the controlling law or Bylaws shall govern.

3. PUBLIC ATTENDANCE

All open portions of meetings of the Board shall be open to the public. Open meetings of the District may be attended by any person to observe and record, and to participate as provided by this Policy.

No person shall be required to sign an attendance sheet, provide identification, provide an address, state whether the person is a District customer or Benefit Unit owner, or provide other personal information as a condition of attending, observing, or recording an open meeting.

The District may provide a voluntary attendance sign-in sheet, substantially in the form attached as Exhibit B, for persons who wish to identify themselves, request follow-up information, or assist the District in maintaining an attendance record. Any attendance sheet, Speaker Request Form, written comment, or other document received by the District in connection with a meeting shall be treated as a District record, retained in accordance with applicable records retention requirements, and may be subject to disclosure under the Oklahoma Open Records Act.

Registration required to establish eligibility to vote at an Annual or Special Meeting of Benefit Unit owners is separate from general public attendance and may be required as provided by the District Bylaws and applicable election procedures.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT AT REGULAR BOARD MEETINGS

As a matter of District policy, the agenda for each regular Board meeting shall include an opportunity for public comment using language substantially consistent with Exhibit C.

Public comment may be included at a special meeting when identified on the posted agenda.

Except where a public hearing is required by law or the posted agenda expressly provides a separate opportunity for public comment on a particular item, members of the public shall address the Board during the designated Public Comment portion of the meeting rather than during individual business items.

Public comment is an opportunity to provide information, opinions, criticism, concerns, or requests to the Board. It is not a question-and-answer session, evidentiary hearing, customer-account proceeding, personnel grievance proceeding, or opportunity to require an immediate response or decision from the Board.

5. SPEAKER REQUEST PROCEDURE

A person wishing to address the Board during Public Comment shall submit a Speaker Request Form, substantially in the form attached as Exhibit A, to District staff before the meeting is called to order.

The form shall require:

1. The name by which the speaker wishes to be called;
2. The agenda item or District business topic the speaker intends to address; and
3. A brief description sufficient to identify the subject of the comment.

A speaker shall not be required to provide a home address, account number, telephone number, email address, customer status, Benefit Unit ownership status, or signature as a condition of speaking. Contact information may be provided voluntarily if the speaker requests follow-up from the District.

District staff shall mark each Speaker Request Form with the order in which it was received. Speakers shall be called in that order.

Speaker requests received after the meeting has been called to order will not be added to the speaker list for that meeting. This cutoff may be modified when reasonably necessary to provide an accommodation required by law.

Written comments may be submitted regardless of whether a person timely registered to speak.

Speaker Request Forms and written comments submitted to the District shall be maintained and disclosed in accordance with applicable records-retention requirements and the Oklahoma Open Records Act.

Submission of a Speaker Request Form is an administrative registration procedure and is not a request for permission to express a particular opinion or viewpoint. District staff shall not approve or reject a speaker based upon the viewpoint or position identified on the form.

6. SPEAKING TIME

Each speaker shall be allowed a maximum of **three (3) minutes**.

A speaker may speak once during the general Public Comment period.

A speaker may not reserve unused time, yield time to another speaker, transfer time, combine time with another speaker, or receive additional time from another speaker.

The District shall use a uniform timing method for all speakers. When practicable, the speaker shall receive a warning when approximately thirty (30) seconds remain.

The general Public Comment period shall be limited to thirty (30) minutes.

Speakers shall be heard in the order their timely Speaker Request Forms were received until the Public Comment period expires.

A person who timely registered but was not reached before expiration of the Public Comment period may submit written comments for distribution to the Board.

The thirty (30) minute overall period may be extended by the Board. Any extension shall apply to the remaining speakers in their existing order and shall not be granted or withheld based upon the identity of a speaker, the viewpoint expressed, or whether the comments support or criticize the District.

The Chairperson may pause or restore time lost because of an interruption by the Board, District staff, equipment failure, or another person. Individual speaking time may also be reasonably modified when necessary to provide an accommodation required by law. Individual speaking time shall not otherwise be enlarged or reduced based upon the speaker, subject matter, or viewpoint expressed.

7. SUBJECT MATTER OF PUBLIC COMMENT

General Public Comment shall relate to the business, operations, services, policies, projects, employees, officials, expenditures, rates, facilities, or other matters within the jurisdiction or responsibilities of the District.

When the posted agenda expressly provides a separate public comment period concerning a specific agenda item, comments during that period shall relate to that item.

If a speaker substantially departs from the permissible subject matter, the Chairperson may identify the applicable subject matter rule and direct the speaker to return to a permissible topic. If the speaker continues to disregard the direction after warning, the Chairperson may terminate the speaker's remaining time.

A comment shall not be considered outside the permissible subject matter merely because it criticizes the District, the Board, an individual Board member, an employee, a District policy, a District project, a rate, an expenditure, or a prior decision.

8. BOARD RESPONSE DURING PUBLIC COMMENT

Board members should listen to public comments without engaging in extended discussion or debate with the speaker.

If a comment concerns a matter that is not separately identified on the posted agenda for discussion, deliberation, or action, Board members shall not discuss, deliberate upon, or take action concerning that matter during the meeting.

When a public comment concerns a matter that is not otherwise identified on the posted agenda, a Board member may acknowledge the comment, state that the matter cannot be discussed by the Board at that meeting, or request that consideration be given to placing the matter on a future agenda. Board members shall not respond substantively to or discuss the merits of the matter.

The District Manager, District staff, or counsel may provide brief procedural or factual information when appropriate, provided that the response does not result in discussion or deliberation by the Board concerning a matter not identified on the posted agenda.

Nothing in this section prevents the Board from discussing or taking action concerning a matter that is otherwise properly identified on the posted agenda.

9. WRITTEN COMMENTS AND MATERIALS

Written comments may be submitted to the District before or during a meeting.

The District does not undertake or promise to read written comments aloud during the meeting.

Written comments received by the District shall be retained as District records and provided to the Board at such time and in such manner as is reasonably practicable. Submission of written material does not require that the material be immediately distributed during the meeting or read aloud.

The District may establish reasonable procedures regarding the distribution of documents during a meeting to avoid interruption or disruption of the proceedings.

10. MEETING DECORUM

All persons attending a District meeting shall conduct themselves in a manner that permits the Board, District staff, speakers, and other attendees to conduct and observe the meeting.

A person shall not:

1. Repeatedly interrupt a Board member, speaker, employee, or other recognized participant after being called to order;
2. Continue speaking after the person's allotted time has expired and the Chairperson has directed the person to yield;
3. Physically obstruct an entrance, exit, aisle, Board work area, or other area necessary for the safe operation of the meeting;
4. Engage in physical intimidation or a true threat of violence;
5. Interfere with District equipment or another person's lawful recording equipment; or
6. Engage in noise, conduct, or activity that materially prevents the Board from continuing the meeting.

Disagreement, criticism, accusation, unpopular opinions, harsh language, or comments that cause discomfort or embarrassment shall not, standing alone, constitute disruption.

Signs, papers, electronic devices, cameras, and recording equipment may be used or displayed so long as they do not materially obstruct visibility, passage, District equipment, or the orderly conduct of the meeting.

11. ENFORCEMENT OF MEETING RULES

The Chairperson is responsible for preserving order.

When reasonably feasible, before terminating a person's speaking time or directing a person to leave the meeting, the Chairperson shall:

1. Identify the conduct violating the applicable meeting rule;
2. Direct the person to comply; and
3. Provide the person a reasonable opportunity to comply.

If the conduct continues after warning, the Chairperson may declare the person out of order, terminate the person's speaking time, recess the meeting, or take other reasonable measures necessary to restore order.

If a person continues materially disrupting the meeting after being directed to stop, or if immediate action is reasonably necessary to address a safety threat, the Chairperson may direct the person to leave the meeting and may request assistance from law enforcement when necessary.

Termination of a person's speaking time does not, by itself, require the person to leave the meeting. Removal from the meeting room shall be based upon continued material disruption, refusal to comply with reasonable meeting rules after warning, or an immediate safety concern.

Enforcement shall be based upon observable conduct and shall be administered without regard to the identity, affiliation, position, opinion, or viewpoint of the person involved.

The minutes or a separate District incident record may document a warning, recess, removal, or other significant enforcement action. Whenever a person is removed from a meeting or law-enforcement assistance is requested, the District Manager or designee shall prepare a brief incident record identifying the conduct, any warning given, the response to the warning, and the action taken.

12. RECORDING OF MEETINGS

Any person attending an open meeting may record the proceedings by audio, video, photography, or other recording method, provided the recording does not interfere with the conduct of the meeting.

The Chairperson or District staff may designate reasonable locations for tripods, cameras, lighting, or other equipment when necessary to preserve access, visibility, safety, or the orderly conduct of the meeting.

No person shall be required to obtain permission or media credentials merely to make a non-disruptive recording of an open meeting.

13. CONFIDENTIAL, CUSTOMER, PERSONNEL, AND LITIGATION MATTERS

Public comment shall not require the District or its representatives to disclose information that is confidential, privileged, or otherwise protected from public disclosure.

A person may raise a concern involving a customer account, employee, claim, litigation matter, or other sensitive subject during Public Comment, but the Board may decline to discuss facts or information that are confidential, privileged, protected from disclosure, or otherwise may not lawfully be discussed in open session.

Detailed customer-account disputes should ordinarily be referred to District staff. Personnel, litigation, privileged, or other matters requiring separate legal procedures may be referred to the District Manager, counsel, or a future properly noticed agenda as appropriate.

14. ANNUAL AND SPECIAL MEETINGS OF BENEFIT UNIT OWNERS

This Policy does not alter the rights of eligible Benefit Unit owners to participate in Annual or Special Meetings as provided by the District Bylaws.

General attendance at an Annual or Special Meeting shall not be conditioned upon voter registration.

A person seeking to vote may be required to separately register and provide information reasonably necessary to establish voting eligibility under the Bylaws, including authority to act on behalf of an entity Benefit Unit owner when applicable.

When an Annual or Special Meeting agenda includes a designated public-comment period, the public-comment procedures established by this Policy shall govern that designated period. Those procedures do not govern or restrict any separate right of an eligible Benefit Unit owner to make motions, debate business, vote, or otherwise participate in the meeting to the extent such rights are provided by the District Bylaws or applicable law.

15. REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION

A person who requires a reasonable accommodation to attend or participate in a meeting should notify the District Manager as early as reasonably possible. Advance notice is requested to allow the District to make appropriate arrangements, but failure to provide advance notice does not automatically preclude an accommodation that can reasonably be provided at the meeting.

The District will provide reasonable accommodations as required by applicable law. Necessary modifications to speaking procedures shall be made without regard to the person's viewpoint or subject matter.

16. ADMINISTRATION

The District Manager, or the District Manager's designee, may prepare, maintain, and make non-substantive administrative modifications to the forms, logs, timing procedures, staff instructions, and other materials used to implement this Policy, provided that no such modification alters the substantive requirements of this Policy. The District shall make a current copy of this Policy reasonably available at the District office and on the District's website.

This Policy shall be administered uniformly and in a manner consistent with the Oklahoma Open Meeting Act, Oklahoma Open Records Act, applicable constitutional requirements, and District Bylaws.

Prior practices inconsistent with this Policy are superseded.

If any provision of this Policy is determined to be invalid or unenforceable, the remaining provisions shall remain effective to the fullest extent permitted by law.

This Policy shall become effective upon adoption by the Board of Directors.

EXHIBIT A
SPEAKER REQUEST FORM
Creek County Rural Water District No. 1

To speak during Public Comment, return this form to District staff before the meeting is called to order.

Meeting Date: _____

Name to be used when called to speak: _____

Agenda Item or District Business Topic: _____

Brief Description of Comment: _____

Optional contact information if follow-up is requested: _____

Notice: Contact information, home address, account number, customer status, Benefit Unit ownership status, and signature are not required to address the Board during Public Comment. Information submitted to the District may constitute a public record subject to the Oklahoma Open Records Act.

Administrative use only:

Time received: _____ Speaker number: _____ Time limit: _____

EXHIBIT B
Attendance Sign In Sheet
Creek County Rural Water District No. 1

Attendance sign in is voluntary for persons attending or observing an open meeting. A separate registration process may be used for persons seeking to vote at a meeting of Benefit Unit owners.

Meeting date: _____ Meeting type: Regular / Special / Annual / Other

Name	Customer or Benefit Unit owner (Optional)	Topic or agenda item, optional	Contact information (optional)

EXHIBIT C
Public Comment Agenda Item

Public Comment. Receive comments from members of the public concerning matters within the business or jurisdiction of Creek County Rural Water District No. 1. Each speaker is limited to three (3) minutes pursuant to the District's Public Participation and Meeting Conduct Policy. The Board will not discuss or take action on a matter raised during Public Comment unless the matter is otherwise identified on the posted agenda for discussion or action.