

PROTOCOL FOR COMMENTS BY THE PUBLIC AT
MEETINGS OF THE
HEMPHILL COUNTY HOSPITAL DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Open Meetings Act was adopted to help make governmental decision-making accessible to the public. It requires meetings of governmental bodies to be open to the public, except for expressly authorized closed sessions, and to be preceded by public notice of the time, place and subject matter of the meeting.

A meeting that is "open to the public" under the Act is one that the public is permitted to attend. The Act does not entitle the public to choose the items to be discussed or to speak about items on the agenda. A governmental body may give members of the public an opportunity to speak at a public meeting. It may set reasonable limits on the number, frequency and length of presentations before it, but may not unfairly discriminate among speakers for or against a particular point of view. The Act permits a member of the public to raise a subject that has not been included in the notice for the meeting, but any discussion of the subject must be limited to a proposal to place the subject on the agenda for a future meeting.

Hemphill County Hospital District (HCHD) Board of Directors honors the principle of the Texas Open Meetings Act by operating in a way that is open and accessible to the people. We strive to conduct business responsibly under the Texas Open Meetings Act to ensure the continued confidence and trust that has been bestowed upon these government officials by the public.

These rules shall apply to all public comment:

- I. Any member of the public who desires to address the HCHD Board regarding an item on the agenda shall be permitted to address the HCHD Board at the beginning of the meeting. The individual requesting to speak must, in advance of the meeting, or just prior to the meeting, indicate his or her desire to speak. This may be done by contacting Kelsey Haley, CEO, at her office at HCHD, 1020 S. 4th Street., Canadian, Texas 79014, by calling 806-323-6422, by email at khaley@hchdst.org, or by completing the public comment sign-in sheet prior to the start of the proceedings. The request to speak must include a brief description of the agenda item to be discussed. Any member of the public who desires to address the HCHD Board regarding an item not on the agenda shall be permitted to address the HCHD Board at the beginning of the meeting if the request is in writing and is requested not later than close of business the day prior to the scheduled board meeting. For purposes of this protocol, and in accordance with the Texas Open Meetings Act, a "member of the public" shall not include any elected HCHD board member.
- II. When recognized, each speaker must give his or her name before commenting and

will be given three (3) minutes for his or her comment; provided, however, a member of the public who addresses the HCHD Board through a translator shall be limited to a maximum of six (6) minutes to make his/her remarks in order to ensure that non-English speakers receive the same opportunity to address the HCHD Board.

- III. Maximum discussion on any non-agenda items, regardless of the number of members of the public wishing to address the HCHD Board on such non-agenda items, shall be limited to fifteen (15) minutes. To the extent possible, the members of the public recognized to speak shall be divided equally between those members of the public wishing to speak in affirmation on a non-agenda item(s) and those members wishing to speak against the non-agenda item(s). This limitation shall not apply to agenda items.
- IV. The process of public comment shall be overseen by the President of the HCHD Board of Directors, including the point in the meeting when comment shall occur, and the total duration of time allotted to public comment. In matters of exceptional interest, including agenda and/or non-agenda items, the HCHD Board may, by the majority vote of the board members, either shorten or lengthen the time allocated for all members of the public and/or the amount of time allocated for specific non-agenda items. An individual wishing to speak who has not followed this protocol may or may not be permitted to speak at the sole discretion of the President of the HCHD Board of Directors.
- V. It is the intention of the HCHD Board to provide open access to the citizens of Hemphill County to express themselves on issues of concern in accordance with Chapter 551 of the Texas Government Code. Members of the public in attendance of any Regular, Special or Emergency meetings of the HCHD Board shall conduct themselves with proper respect and decorum in speaking to, and/or addressing the board members, in participating in public discussions, and in all actions in the presence of the board members.
- VI. The HCHD Board may not prohibit public criticism of the HCHD Board, including criticism of any act, omission, policy, procedure, program, or service; provided, however, that this prohibition does not apply to public criticism that is otherwise prohibited by law.
- VII. This protocol will be made available before each Board meeting and upon request.