

RULES OF PROCEDURE

I. Applicability

Rule 1. Applicability of Rules. These rules apply to all meetings of the Board of Commissioners of Stokes County at which the board is empowered to exercise any of the executive, quasi-judicial, administrative, or legislative powers conferred on it by law.

II. Open Meetings

Rule 2. Meetings to Be Open.

- a. It is the public policy of North Carolina and of Stokes County that the hearings, deliberations, and actions of this board and its committees be conducted openly.
- b. Except as otherwise provided in these rules and in accordance with applicable law, each official meeting of the Stokes County Board of Commissioners shall be open to the public and any person is entitled to attend such a meeting.
- c. For the purposes of the provisions of these rules concerning open meetings, an official meeting of the board is defined as any gathering together at any time or place or the simultaneous communication by conference telephone or other electronic means of a majority of board members for the purpose of conducting hearings, participating in deliberations, or voting upon or otherwise transacting public business within the jurisdiction, real or apparent, of the board.

Rule 3. Closed Sessions.

- a. Notwithstanding the provisions of Rule 2, the board may hold a closed session and exclude the public under the following circumstances and no others:
 1. To prevent the disclosure of information that is privileged or confidential pursuant to the law of this state or of the United States, or is not considered a public record within the meaning of Chapter 132 of the General Statutes.
 2. To consult with the county attorney or another attorney employed or retained by the county in order to preserve the attorney-client privilege.
 3. To discuss matters relating to the location or expansion of industries or other businesses in the county.
 4. To consider and take action with respect to the position to be taken by the county in negotiating the price or other material terms of an agreement for the acquisition or lease of real property.

5. To consider and take action with respect to the position to be taken by the county in negotiating the amount of compensation or other material terms of an employment contract.
 6. To consider the initial employment or appointment of an individual to any office or position, other than a vacancy in the board of county commissioners or any other public body, and to consider the qualifications, competence, performance, character, and fitness of any public officer or employee, other than a member of the board of commissioners or of some other public body.
 7. To hear or investigate a charge or complaint by or against an individual public officer or employee.
 8. To plan, conduct, or hear reports concerning investigations of alleged criminal misconduct.
- b. The board may go into closed session only upon motion made and adopted at an open meeting. A motion to go into closed session must cite one or more of the permissible purposes listed in subsection (a) of this rule. In addition, a motion to go into closed session pursuant to Rule 3(a)(1) must state the name or citation of the law that renders the information to be discussed privileged or confidential, and a motion to go into closed session pursuant to Rule 3(a)(2) must identify the parties in each existing lawsuit, if any, concerning which the board expects to receive advice during the closed session.
- c. Unless the motion to go into closed session provides otherwise, the county manager, county attorney, and clerk to the board may attend the closed session. No other person may attend the closed session unless specifically invited by majority vote of the board.

III. Organization of the Board

Rule 4. Organizational Meeting.

- a. **Even-numbered Years.** The board shall hold an organizational meeting at its regular meeting place at a time determined and advertised by the board on the first Monday in December of each even numbered year. The agenda for this organizational meeting shall be limited to induction of newly elected members of the board of county commissioners and other elected county officials and organization of the board for the ensuing year. [The organizational meeting shall be convened and concluded before the regular December meeting is convened.] The clerk to the board of commissioners shall call the meeting to order and shall preside until a chair is elected. As the second order, the board shall elect a chair and vice-chair from among its members. As the third and fourth order, the board may appoint a clerk and an attorney.

- b. **Odd-numbered Years.** At the first regular meeting in December of each odd-numbered year, the first order of business shall be approval of the minutes of the previous meeting. The second order of business shall be election of the chair and vice-chair for the ensuing year. The third and fourth orders of business may be appointment of the clerk and county attorney.

Rule 5. Election of the Chair. The chair of the board shall be elected annually for a term of one year and shall not be removed from the office of chair unless he or she becomes disqualified to serve as a member of the board.

IV. Regular and Special Meetings

Rule 6. Regular and Special Meetings.

- a. **Regular Meetings.** The board shall hold a regular meeting on the second Monday (6:00 pm) and fourth Monday (2:00 pm) of each month. If a regular meeting day is a holiday on which county offices are closed, the meeting shall be held on the next business day or such succeeding day as may be specified in the motion adjourning the immediately preceding regular meeting. Regular meetings shall be held in the Commissioners' Chambers of the Government Center.
- b. **Special Meetings.** The chair or a majority of the members of the board may at any time call a special meeting of the board by signing a notice stating the time and place of the meeting and the subjects to be considered. The person or persons who call the meeting shall cause the notice to be posted on the door of the regular meeting place and delivered to the chair and all other board members at least 48 hours before the meeting. In addition, the notice shall be emailed or delivered to individual persons and news media organizations that have requested such notice as provided in subsection (d), below. Only those items of business specified in the notice may be transacted at a special meeting, unless all members are present or those who are not present have signed a written waiver.
- c. **Emergency Meetings.** If a special meeting is called to deal with an unexpected circumstance that requires immediate consideration by the board, the notice requirements of this rule do not apply. However, the person or persons who call an emergency meeting shall take reasonable action to inform the other members and the public of the

meeting. Local news organizations that have requested notice of special meetings as provided in subsection (d), below, shall be notified of such emergency meetings by the same method used to notify board members. Only business connected with the emergency may be discussed at the meeting.

- d. **Sunshine List.** Any individual person and any newspaper, wire service, radio station, and television station may file with the clerk to the board of commissioners a written request for notice of all special meetings of the board. Requests by individuals must be renewed on or before the last day of each calendar quarter and are subject to a \$10.00 nonrefundable annual fee. Requests made by news media organizations must be renewed annually on or before December 1st and are not subject to any fee.
- e. **Work Sessions and Committee Meetings.** The board may schedule work sessions, committee meetings, or other informal meetings of the board or a majority of the members of the board at such times and with respect to such subject matter as may be established by resolution or order of the board. A schedule of any such meetings that are held on a regular basis shall be filed in the same place and manner as the schedule of regular meetings. Work sessions and other informal official meetings not held on a regular schedule are subject to the same notice requirements as special board meetings.

Rule 7. All Meetings within the County. All meetings shall be held within the boundaries of Stokes County except as otherwise provided herein.

- 1. A joint meeting with the governing board of any other political subdivision of this state or any other state may be held within the boundaries of either subdivision as may be stated in the call of the meeting. At any such joint meeting, this board reserves the right to vote separately on all matters coming before the joint meeting.
- 2. A special meeting called for the purpose of considering and acting upon any order or resolution requesting members of the General Assembly representing all or any portion of this county to support or oppose any bill pending in the General Assembly or proposed for introduction therein may be held in Raleigh or such other place as may be stated in the call of the meeting.
- 3. The Board of Commissioners will conduct its regular meetings in the Commissioners' Chambers at the Administrative Building in Danbury.

Rule 8. Broadcasting and Recording Meetings.

- a. Except as provided in this rule, any radio or television station is entitled to broadcast all or any part of an official meeting of the board that is required to be open to the public. Any person may photograph, film tape-record, or otherwise reproduce any part of a meeting required to be open.
- b. Any radio or television station wishing to broadcast any portion of an official meeting of the board shall so notify the county manager no later than 24 hours before the meeting. If the number of requests or the quantity and size of the necessary equipment is such that the meeting cannot be accommodated in the designated meeting room and no suitable alternative site in the county office building is available, the county manager may require the news media either to pool equipment and personnel or to secure and pay the costs of an alternative meeting site that is mutually agreeable to the board and the media representatives.
- c. All open portions of Board of Commissioners meetings will be livestreamed and archived.
- d. All Closed Session portions of Board of Commissioners meetings will be audio recorded. The Clerk to the Board shall use recordings to generate detailed minutes and general accounts of the meetings. Once these documents are officially approved by the Board, recordings will be destroyed accordingly.

V. Agenda

Rule 9. Agenda

- a. The chairman and clerk to the board shall prepare the agenda for each regular, special, and emergency meeting. A request to have an item of business placed on the agenda for a regular meeting must be received at least 48 hours before the meeting. Any board member may, by a timely request, have an item placed on the agenda.
- b. The agenda packet shall include the agenda document, any proposed ordinances or amendments to ordinances, and supporting documentation and background information relevant to items on the agenda. A copy of the agenda packet shall be delivered electronically to each member of the board no later than 48 hours prior to the Monday meeting. Documents in the agenda packet, if not previously available for public inspection, shall become so when packets have been delivered to each board member. The proposed agenda shall be posted on the county web site at least 48 hours before the meeting.
- c. The board may, by majority vote, add an item that is not on the agenda or remove an item from the agenda. Any item added to the agenda or removed from the agenda must be added or removed at the time of the adoption of the agenda, any item brought up after that time will be

ruled out of order by the Chairman, action items added to the agenda at the time of the meeting cannot be acted on at the meeting unless the Board by majority vote agrees to take action.

Rule 10. Informal Public Comments. Before each regular bimonthly meeting of the Board the Clerk shall post a sign-up sheet at the entrance of the meeting room for speakers in the Public Comments section of the meeting. The sign-up sheet shall list the following rules for public comments: There will be a total time of 30 minutes allotted for public comments at each regular meeting. Each speaker shall be allowed 4 minutes for public comments with the option to yield time to another speaker or add an optional minute depending on the number of speakers that have signed up while abiding by the 30-minute total time limit. All speakers shall maintain good decorum and show respect and good manners. Vulgar language, profanity, inappropriate gestures, insults, personal attacks, and inflammatory language is prohibited. The Chairman of the Board shall enforce these rules, and anyone not complying with these rules shall not be allowed to continue. At their discretion members of the BOCC may address items from the public comments portion of the meeting during the Commissioner comment period *

*Added by the Board of Commissioners at the February 11, 2013 meeting and amended on April 26, 2021 and September 12, 2022.

Rule 11. Order of Business. At regular meetings, the board shall proceed to business in the following order:

1. Approval of the Agenda
2. Scheduled Public Hearings
3. Public Comments
4. Comments – Manager/Commissioners
5. Consent Agenda
6. Information Agenda
7. Discussion Agenda*
8. Action Agenda
9. Closed session (if necessary)

Without objection, the chair may call items in any order most convenient for the dispatch of business.

*Items of a Time Sensitive Nature on the Discussion Agenda May Be Moved to the Action Agenda Upon Approval of the Board

VI. Conduct of Debate

Rule 12. Powers of the Chair. The chair shall preside at all meetings of the board. A member must be recognized by the chair in order to address the board. The chair shall have the following powers:

1. To rule on points of parliamentary procedure, including the right to rule out of order any motion patently offered for obstructive or dilatory purposes;
2. To determine whether a speaker has gone beyond reasonable standards of courtesy in his or her remarks and to entertain and rule on objections from other members on this ground;
3. To call a brief recess at any time;
4. To adjourn in an emergency.

Rule 13. Action by the Board. On actions items, the Board shall proceed by motion with discussion to follow. Any member including the chair, may make a motion. A motion does not require a second.

Rule 14. One Motion at a Time. A member may make only one motion at a time.

Rule 15. Substantive Motion. A substantive motion is out of order while another substantive motion is pending.

Rule 16. Adoption by Majority Vote. A motion shall be adopted if approved by a majority of the votes cast, a quorum being present, unless these rules or the laws of North Carolina require an extraordinary majority. In the case of a vote that is not unanimous the names of the voters will be clearly indicated in the minutes of yes and no votes.

Rule 17. Debate. The chair shall state the motion and then open the floor to debate, presiding over the debate according to these general principles:

1. The member making the motion or introducing the ordinance, resolution, or order is entitled to speak first.
2. A member who has not spoken on the issue shall be recognized before someone who has already spoken.
3. To the extent possible, the debate shall alternate between opponents and proponents of the measure.

Rule 18. Procedural Motions.

- a. In addition to substantive proposals, the procedural motions listed in subsection (b) of this rule, and no others, shall be in order. Unless otherwise noted, each motion is debatable, may be amended, and requires a majority vote for adoption.
- b. In order of priority, the procedural motions are:
 1. *To Adjourn.* The motion may be made only at the conclusion of action on a pending matter; it may not interrupt deliberation of a pending matter.
 2. *To Take a Recess.*
 3. *To Call to Follow the Agenda.* The motion must be made at the first reasonable opportunity or it is waived.
 4. *To Suspend the Rules.* The motion requires a vote equal to a quorum.
 5. *To Divide a Complex Motion and Consider It by Paragraph.*
 6. *To Defer Consideration.* A substantive motion whose consideration has been deferred expires one hundred days thereafter, unless a motion to revive consideration is adopted.
 7. *To Call the Previous Question.* The motion is not in order until there have been at least 5 minutes of debate and every member has had one opportunity to speak.
 8. *To Postpone to a Certain Time or Day.*
 9. *To Refer to Committee.* Sixty days after a motion has been referred to a committee, the introducer may compel consideration of the measure by the entire board, regardless of whether the committee has reported the matter back to the board.

10. *To Amend.* An amendment to a motion must be germane to the subject of the motion, but it may not achieve the opposite effect of the motion. There may be an amendment to the motion and an amendment to an amendment, but no further amendments. Any amendment to a proposed ordinance shall be reduced to writing.
11. *To Revive Consideration.* The motion is in order at any time within one hundred days of a vote deferring consideration of it. A substantive motion on which consideration has been deferred expires one hundred days after the deferral, unless a motion to revive consideration is adopted.
12. *To Reconsider.* The motion must be made at the same meeting at which the original vote was taken, and by a member who voted with the prevailing side. The motion cannot interrupt deliberation on a pending matter but is in order at any time before adjournments.
13. *To Prevent Reconsideration for Six Months.* The motion shall be in order immediately following the defeat of a substantive motion and at no other time. The motion requires a vote equal to a quorum and is valid for six months or until the next regular election of county commissioners, whichever occurs first.

Rule 19. Renewal of Motion. A defeated motion may not be renewed at the same meeting.

Rule 20. Withdrawal of Motion. The introducer may withdraw a motion at any time before the chair puts the motion to a vote.

Rule 21. Duty to Vote. It is the duty of each member to vote unless excused by a majority vote according to law. The board may excuse members from voting on matters involving their own financial interest or official conduct. A member who wishes to be excused from voting shall so inform the chair, who shall take a vote of the remaining members. A member, who fails to vote, not having been excused, shall be recorded as voting in the affirmative. Members voting in favor of the motion say “aye” and those opposed to the motion to say “no”.

Rule 22. Prohibition of Secret Voting. No vote may be taken by secret ballot. If the board decides to vote by written ballot, each member shall sign his or her ballot and the minutes shall record the vote of each member. These ballots shall be retained and made available for public inspection until the minutes of that meeting have been approved, at which time they may be destroyed.

Rule 23. Action by Reference. The board shall not deliberate, vote, or otherwise act on any matter by reference to an agenda or document number unless copies of the agenda or documents being referenced are available for public inspection at the meeting and are so worded that people at the meeting can understand what is being discussed or acted on.

Rule 24. Introduction of Ordinances, Resolutions, and Orders. A proposed ordinance shall be deemed introduced at the first meeting at which it is on the agenda, regardless of whether it is actually considered by the board, and its introduction shall be recorded in the minutes.

Rule 25. Adoption, Amendment, or Repeal of Ordinances. To be adopted at the meeting where first introduced, an ordinance or any action with the effect of an ordinance, or any ordinance amending or repealing an existing ordinance (except the budget ordinance, a bond order, or another ordinance requiring a public hearing before adoption) must be approved by all members of the board of commissioners. If the proposed measure is approved by a majority of those voting but not by all the members of the board, or if the measure is not voted on at the meeting where introduced, it shall be considered at the next regular meeting of the board. If the proposal receives a majority of the votes cast at the next meeting or within one hundred days of being introduced, it is adopted.

Rule 26. Quorum. A majority of the board membership shall constitute a quorum. The number required for a quorum is not affected by vacancies. If a member has withdrawn from a meeting without being excused by majority vote of the remaining members present, he or she shall be counted as present for the purposes of determining whether a quorum is present. The board may compel the attendance of an absent member by ordering the sheriff to take the member into custody.

Rule 27. Public Hearings. Public hearings required by law or deemed advisable by the board shall be organized by a special order, adopted by a majority vote, setting forth the subject, date, place, and time of the hearing as well as any rules regarding the length of time allotted to each speaker and designating representatives to speak for large groups. At the appointed time, the chair shall call the hearing to order and preside over it. When the allotted time expires, the chair shall declare the hearing ended and the board shall resume the regular order of business.

Rule 28. Quorum at Public Hearings. A quorum of the board shall be required at all public hearings required by law.

Rule 29. Minutes. Minutes shall be kept of all board meetings.

Rule 30. Appointments. The board shall use the following procedure to make appointments to fill vacancies in other boards and public offices over which the board has power of appointment.

No appointment shall be made until the meeting following the meeting at which the opening has been announced.

The chair shall open the floor to nominations, where upon the members shall put forward and debate names of possible appointees. When debate ends, the chair shall call the roll of the members, and each member shall vote. The votes shall not be tallied until each member has voted.

Each vote shall be decided by a majority of the valid ballots cast. It is the duty of each member to vote for as many appointees as there are appointments to be made, but failure to do so does not invalidate that member's ballot.

Rule 31. Reference to *Robert's Rules of Order*. To the extent not provided for in, and not conflicting with the spirit of, these rules, the chair shall refer to *Robert's Rules of Order* to resolve procedural questions.

Rule 32. Remote Participation by Board Members. In the event a member of the board is unable to participate in a meeting of the board in-person due to circumstances beyond their control said member (hereinafter "remote member") shall be allowed to participate in said meeting by means of technology that allows all persons participating in the meeting to hear each other at the same time ("simultaneous communication" technology). In such cases, the following procedures shall apply:

a. The method of simultaneous communication must allow the remote member to: (1) hear what is said by the other members of the board, (2) hear what is said by any individual addressing the board, and (3) be heard by the other members of the board and, when in open session, by the public.

b. If the method of simultaneous communication does not allow for the remote member to be physically seen, the remote member shall not participate in any closed session and the remote member must identify himself or herself when: (1) roll is taken or when the meeting commences; (2) prior to participating in the deliberations, making motions, proposing amendments, and raising points of order; and (3) prior to voting.

c. A remote member shall be counted for purposes of establishing a quorum as long as the chosen method of simultaneous communication is connected and active. If the remote member loses connection to the meeting and that connection is not promptly restored, that member shall no longer count towards quorum.

d. A remote member shall be allowed to vote and may cast the deciding vote on a matter pending before the board. If the remote member loses connection to the meeting and that connection is not promptly restored, the remote member will be excused from the vote.

e. The minutes of any meeting at which a member participates remotely shall reflect which members were participating remotely and shall reflect the times such members joined or left the meeting.

f. All documents considered by the board shall be provided to the remote member.

g. All votes shall be by roll call.

h. All chats, instant messages, texts, or other written communications between the board members and the remote member regarding the transaction of public business are deemed a public record.

i. Remote participation in any quasi-judicial functions of the board (e.g. personnel proceedings and conditional or special use permit and variance proceedings) is not permitted.

Adopted by the Stokes County Board of County Commissioners December 12, 2002 with new time and date of meetings to be effective January 1, 2003.

Amended by the Board of County Commissioners on August 8, 2016, April 26, 2021, September 12, 2022, September 26, 2022, and November 12, 2022.

