



# *Village of West Salem*

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## **West Salem Village Board of Trustees Guidelines for Public Comment during Village Board Meetings and at Public Hearings**

The Village Board of Trustees welcomes public comment during most regular meetings and at public hearings of its committees, commissions, and the Village Board. The Village is subject to the State of Wisconsin Open Records Law. This means almost all written and electronic communication with the Village and other documents filed with the Village are subject to open records requests along with information which appears in committee and Village Board minutes and official recordings of same. Village Board minutes are also published in the Village official newspaper of record. Procedures are intended to provide a structured format whereby constituents of the Village Board of Trustees can provide information or make comment about items of public interest. Village Board meetings and commission and committee meetings shall be conducted in a courteous manner. Citizens, Board members, and Committee and Commission members shall be allowed to state their positions in an atmosphere free of slander, insults, obscene remarks, threats of violence, or for use of Board or Committee as a forum for politics. Sufficient warnings may be given by the Village President or Committee Chair at any time during the remarks, and in the event that any individual shall violate the rules of decorum heretofore set forth, such person may then be cut off from comment or debate.

### **Public Comment**

The Village Board meeting agendas provide an opportunity for members of the public to address the Village Board of Trustees. Members of the general public wishing to make a comment at a Village Board meeting may request permission to do so prior to the Public Comment portion of the agenda. Such permission should be requested by filling out a request form prior to the meeting or by completing the form in person at the meeting. A request form can be found at <https://www.westsalemwi.com> and will also be available at the Village Board meeting. Forms will be presented to the Village President for consideration. Generally, matters that are personal in nature or relate to personnel matters will not be heard publicly. The Village President has a responsibility to discourage abusive or redundant comments. If the appropriate request is not made in advance, the Village President has the discretion to hear from individuals present at the meeting, but a request form must still be completed. Board members do not respond to public comment during a meeting, and items or questions presented as "public comment" will not be

discussed by the Village Board. Board members may ask for clarification on public comments received, however. The following rules will apply:

- Each speaker must contain comments to no more than three (3) minutes. Speakers are encouraged to prepare their remarks to fit within the three-minute time limit.
- When the speaker's name is called, speaker must step to the podium and will be asked to state his or her name and complete address for the record prior to speaking on a matter.
- The Village encourages speakers to provide written comments in addition to their spoken comments. If a speaker would like to present their written comments to the Village Board, one copy may be provided to the Village Administrator and will be shared with the Village Board members.

### **Public Hearing**

A public hearing is primarily intended to obtain public testimony or comment before certain decisions are made. A public hearing is obligatory when due process is required or when a specific statute or local regulation requires one. The Village Board may also hold a public hearing when it desires public input on a sensitive or controversial policy issue. The record of a public hearing consists of all testimony or comment presented at the hearing and all documents or exhibits that have been submitted in connection with the matter being considered. The Village President has a responsibility to discourage abusive or redundant comments. Each speaker must register prior to the public hearing by completing a request form. A request form can be found at <https://www.westsalemwi.com> and forms will also be available at the meeting. Board members do not respond to comment during a public hearing. The following rules will apply:

- Each speaker must contain comments to no more than three (3) minutes. Speakers are encouraged to prepare their remarks to fit within the three-minute time limit.
- When the speaker's name is called, speaker must step to the podium and will be asked to state his or her name and complete address for the record prior to speaking on a matter.
- Speaker comments must be germane to the subject matter of the public hearing.
- Speakers may not speak more than once on a specific topic. Speakers who wish to comment on more than one topic must submit a separate request for each item.
- The Village encourages speakers to provide written comments in addition to their spoken comments. If a speaker would like to present their written comments to the Village Board, one copy may be provided to the Village Administrator and will be shared with the Village Board members.