

Jackson Parish Library
Public Comments Policy

PURPOSE: The Jackson Parish Library Board of Control (herein referred to as “Library Board”) recognizes the importance of receiving comments from the public with the purpose being to provide an opportunity for them to express their views, comments, or opinions to the Board members. It is a time for the Board to listen to the public. The following policy has been established to maintain order and decorum during the public comment period. Furthermore, these guidelines are designed to ensure fairness to each speaker by establishing rules in advance that will be applied equally to each speaker.

SCOPE: This policy applies to all persons, including the Library Board, Library staff, and the general public in attendance of a public meeting called by the Library Board.

POLICY STATEMENT: Pursuant to Louisiana R.S. 42:14 (D), the Library Board is required to allow a public comment period prior to action on an agenda item upon which a vote is to be taken. Under the same revised statute, the Library Board also has the authority to adopt reasonable rules and restrictions regarding such comment period.

GUIDELINES

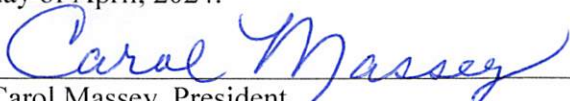
The public comment period shall be reserved as an item of business on the agenda for all meetings of the Library Board which are subject to the notice requirements of Louisiana R.S. 42:19 (A). All comments to the Library Board during the public comment period shall be subject to the following guidelines:

1. Prior to the start of the public comment period, persons wishing to address the Board will register on a sign-up sheet stationed by the meeting room entrance. Prior to beginning the public comment period, the Secretary, or designated staff member, will collect the sign-up sheet and recognize the speakers in the order that they registered. Speakers will address the Library Board from the podium or other designated area. Special accommodations will be made for persons with a disability or for those with special needs (example: translator) with appropriate advanced notice to the Library Board Secretary. Speakers will be asked to identify themselves for the record.
2. Each speaker shall be limited to a maximum time of two (2) minutes. Each speaker will only be allowed to speak once during the public comment period. The Secretary shall serve as timekeeper and the Library Board President will promptly announce when the speaker's time has expired.
3. Speakers may speak on any topic related to the jurisdiction of the Library Board in Jackson Parish unless it is a topic for which a public hearing is being held on the same meeting agenda. This is for efficiency and to avoid redundancy as these items have a designated public comments section during the hearing.

4. No time may be yielded or transferred from one speaker to another. Each speaker will be concise and avoid repetition. In order to avoid repetition and delay, groups of people supporting the same position are encouraged to designate a spokesperson for the group.
5. The public comment period is not intended to require the Library Board and/or any staff to answer any impromptu questions. Library Board members may ask a speaker to clarify information in order to better understand the speaker's comments. The Board will not act on an item presented during the public comment period. Upon completion of the public comment period and when appropriate, the Library Board may summarize the comments heard from citizens and the Library Board may refer inquires made during the public comment period to their designated staff member(s) to address as appropriate. If necessary, the item may be added to the agenda of a future meeting, thereby providing the staff an opportunity to research the item and provide data to the Board for consideration and review.
6. Speakers will address comments to the entire Library Board as a whole and not one individual member. Discussions between speakers and members of the audience will not be permitted during the public comment period.
7. Speakers who have prepared written remarks are encouraged to leave a copy of such remarks with the Library Board Secretary. Speakers who have materials that they want distributed to the Library Board related to the item they plan to discuss during the public comment period, shall provide nine (9) copies of those documents to the Secretary prior to the start of the meeting. The Secretary shall distribute the copies to the Library Board, Attorney, and retain one copy for the record.
8. Speakers shall be civil and courteous in their language and presentation. Profanity, vulgar language, inappropriate gestures, hate speech, insults, personal attacks, accusations, defamation to a person, people, or organization, or other inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated. It is the desire of the Library Board to conduct the business of the library in an environment that is open and available to the public while maintaining decorum and a professional atmosphere.
9. In order to provide for the maintenance of order and decorum in the conduct of the meeting, the Library Board President may declare "out-of-order" any person who fails to comply with this policy. The Library Board President shall caution any such person to abide by the provisions of this policy. Those found to be substantially interfering with the Library Board's ability to conduct business and engaging in disorderly conduct may be removed from the meeting.
10. Upon unanimous approval of the Library Board members present at a meeting, they may take up a matter not on the agenda. Any such matter shall be identified in the motion to amend the agenda with reasonable specificity, including the purpose for the addition to the agenda, and entered into the minutes of the meeting. Prior to any vote on the motion to take up a matter not on the agenda by the Library Board, there shall be an opportunity for public comment on any such motion in accordance with R.S. 42:14 or 15.

11. Employees of the Library are allowed to speak during the public comments section without fear of retaliation or an expectation of preferential treatment. They will be treated as a member of the general public and will adhere to all other guidelines defined in this policy.
12. Library Board members who are present at an open meeting count towards the quorum required to call a meeting and therefore cannot participate as a member of the public to address the Library Board during the public comments section. Whether a Library Board member is sitting with the rest of the Library Board, standing or sitting with the audience, or announcing that they aren't present as an official, they will remain an official member of the Library Board as duly appointed at all times during a Library Board meeting.
13. Speakers are hereby notified that any public comments, distributed materials, etc. that is shared with the Library Board or staff will become part of the public record and is thereby subject to Louisiana Public Records Law in accordance with Louisiana R.S. 44:1-44:41.

Reviewed and adopted by the Jackson Parish Library Board of Control on the 15th day of April, 2024.



Carol Massey, President
Jackson Parish Library Board of Control