

RULES OF PROCEDURE, CONDUCT AND DECORUM AT MEETINGS OF THE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT

- I. All Regular, Special, Emergency and Executive Session Meetings of the Cochran County Commissioners Court will be called and conducted in accordance with the provisions of the Texas Open Meetings Act, Chapter 551, Government Code.
- II. Regular, Special and Emergency Meetings of the Cochran County Commissioners Court are open to the public and to representatives of the press and media. Executive Sessions of the Commissioners Court are not open to the public, the press or the media, and only those individuals expressly requested or ordered to be present are allowed to attend Executive Sessions.
- III. The Cochran County Commissioners Court meets in Regular Session on the second Monday of the month, and the day before the last business day of the month each month. In order for a matter or issue to appear as an agenda item on the Agenda of any Regular Meeting of the Commissioners Court, a request must be filed with and approved by at least one member of the Commissioners Court and/or the County Judge at least 96 hours before the scheduled Regular Meeting of the Commissioners Court. If an agenda item has been voted on in a prior meeting, the motion or motions made will stand. It will not be placed back on the agenda unless the Commissioners Court Chair or a Commissioner deem that it is warranted.
- IV. The business of Cochran County is conducted by and between the members of the Cochran County Commissioners Court and by those members of the county staff, elected officials, department heads, consultants, experts and/or members of the public requested to be present and participate. While the public is invited to attend all meetings of the Commissioners Court (except Executive Sessions) the public's participation therein is limited to that of observes unless a member (or members) of the public is requested to address the Commissioners Court on a particular issue (or issues) or unless the member (or members) of the public completes a Public Participation Form and submits same to the County Judges Office at least 24 hours prior to the time the agenda item (or items) is addressed by the Court. A sample of the Cochran County Commissioners Court Public Participation Form is attached hereto as Exhibit "A."
 - A. Each member of the public who appears before the Commissioners Court shall be limited to a maximum of three (3) minutes to make his/her remarks. Time for each speaker shall be maintained by the County Clerk or such other designated representative of the Commissioners Court.
 - B. Maximum discussion on any agenda item, regardless of the number of members of the public wishing to address the Commissioners Court on such agenda item (or items) shall be limited to thirty (30) minutes. In the event that more than six (6) members of the public wish to address a particular agenda item (or items), then only the first six (6) members of the public recognized to speak shall be divided equally between those members of the public wishing to speak for the agenda item (or items) and those members of the public wishing to speak against the agenda item (or items).

- C. In matters of exceptional interest, the Court may, by the majority vote of the members of the Court in attendance at the meeting, either shorten or lengthen the time allocated for a particular member of the public, all members of the public and/or the amount of time allocated for all agenda items and/or a specific agenda item.
- D. It is the intention of the Court to provide an open access to the citizens of Cochran County to address the Commissioners Court and to express themselves on issues of county government. Members of the public are reminded that the Cochran County Commissioners Court is a Constitutional Court, with both judicial and legislative powers, created under Article V, Section 1 and Section 18 of the Texas Constitution. As a Constitutional Court, the Cochran County Commissioners Court also possesses the power to issue a Contempt of Court Citation under Section 81.023 of the Texas Local Government Code. Accordingly, all members of the public in attendance at any Regular, Special and/or Emergency meeting of the Court shall conduct themselves with proper respect and decorum in speaking to, and/or addressing the Court; in participating in public discussions before the Court; and in all actions in the presence of the Court. Proper attire for men, women and children is mandatory. Those members of the public who are inappropriately attired and/or who do not conduct themselves in an orderly and appropriate manner will be ordered to leave the meeting. Refusal to abide by the Court's order and/or continued disruption of the meeting may result in a Contempt of Court Citation.
- E. It is not the intention of the Cochran County Commissioners Court to provide a public forum for the demeaning of any individual or group. Neither is it the intention of the Court to allow a member (or members) of the public to insult the honesty and/or integrity of the Court, as a body, or any member or members of the Court, individually or collectively. Accordingly, profane, insulting or threatening language directed toward the Court and/or any person in the Court's presence and/or racial, ethnic, or gender slurs or epithets will not be tolerated. Violation of these rules may result in the following sanctions:
- F. Cell phones and electronic devices must be kept to a minimum unless it is pertinent to the operation of the Court, or it directly relates to the current agenda item. The only items that need to be discussed should only be agenda items. The agenda will be followed in order and each item will be addressed to the best of our ability before we move to the next agenda item. There may be a time when this is not possible, or an exception must be made if another agenda item not yet covered will have effect on the current agenda item. Public comment is for the public, elected or appointed officials who are in the Courtroom to give information or express an opinion related to a current agenda item. Comments are limited to three minutes per person. After persons make public comments, the Commissioner's Court is not required to have a response or to answer questions. Members of the public and Commissioner's Court shall be respectful.

1. cancellation of a speaker's remaining time;
 2. removal from the Commissioners Courtroom.
 3. a Contempt Citation; and/or
 4. such other civil and/or criminal sanctions as may be authorized under the Constitution, Statutes and Codes of the State of Texas.
- V. The County Judge is the presiding officer of the Cochran County Commissioners Court and is a fully participating member thereof. In the event of the absence of the County Judge, the senior member of the Commissioners Court (in terms of total number of years as an elected representative) present at the Regular, Special, and Emergency meeting or Executive Session, shall serve as the Judge Pro-Tem of the Court. However, nothing herein shall prevent the senior member of this Commissioners Court from delegating this duty to another member of the Commissioners Court.
- VI. The County Judge (or the designated Judge Pro-Tem of the Commissioners Court), as presiding officer of the Commissioners Court, is responsible for conducting all meetings, and members of the public who have properly completed a Public Participation Form and submitted same to the County Judges Office must wait to be recognized before they will be allowed to address the Court.
- VII. Special rules for the press and media:
- A. No media personnel or equipment, including lights, cameras or microphones, will be located on the Commissioners Court bench nor closer than five (5') feet in front of the Commissioners Court bench.
 - B. Reporters and media technicians are required to structure their movements, equipment setup and takedown and adjustments, etc., in such a manner as to not disrupt the Commissioners Court deliberations or the ability of the public to see, hear, and participate in the proceedings.
 - C. Interviews shall not be conducted inside the Commissioners Courtroom during the time the Court is in session.
 - D. Media interviews which are conducted outside the Commissioners Courtroom should be conducted in such a manner that the interview does not disturb, impede, or disrupt the proceedings of any regular, special, emergency and/or executive session of the Court.
- VIII. The Sheriff of Cochran County, Texas, or his designated deputy, shall serve as the bailiff at all Regular, Special, and Emergency meetings of the Court, upon request. However, in the event of the absence of the sheriff, or in the event that there exists a conflict of interest between the sheriff, any member of the sheriff's department, and the Commissioners Court, or in the event of an Executive Session of the Court in which the Sheriff is not an authorized participant, then in such event, the Court shall appoint such other commissioned peace officers to serve as bailiff as may be

necessary. If the Sheriff or a designee is not available, the Cochran County Constable may serve.

- IX. From time to time, the Commissioners Court shall conduct town meetings and public hearings. These rules of procedure, conduct and decorum shall also apply to such town meetings and public hearings; however, the Commissioners Court may adopt such additional and supplemental rules for such meetings as may be necessary and appropriate to conduct such meetings in an orderly, efficient and proper manner.
- X. These Rules of Procedure, Conduct and Decorum at Meetings of the Cochran County Commissioners Court shall be effective immediately upon adoption by the Court and shall remain in full force and effect until amended or repealed by a majority vote of the Commissioners Court.

**ADOPTED BY THE UNANIMOUS VOTE OF THE
COCHRAN COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT**

on this the 8th day of April 2024.

Pat Sabala Henry, County Judge

Timothy Roberts
Commissioner, Pct. 1

Eric Silhan,
Commissioner, Pct. 3

Matt D. Evans,
Commissioner, Pct. 2

Reynaldo Morin,
Commissioner, Pct. 4

Attest:

Lisa Smith, County Clerk

Exhibit A

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT PUBLIC PARTICIPATION FORM

Instructions: Fill out all appropriate blanks. Please print or write legibly.

NAME: _____

HOME ADDRESS:

HOME TELEPHONE:

PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT:

EMPLOYMENT TELEPHONE:

Do you represent any particular group or organization?

If you do represent a group or organization, please state the name, address and telephone number of such group or organization.

Which agenda item (or items) do you wish to address?

In general, are you for or against such agenda item (or items)?

Signature: _____

NOTE: This Public Participation Form must be presented to the County Judges office prior to the time the agenda item (or items) you wish to address are discussed before the Court.