

February 16, 2026

RULES OF PROCEDURE

Peer County Review

Chatham County Board of Commissioners Work Session

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INTRODUCTION

At the 2026 Board of Commissioners Budget Retreat, the Board of Commissioners directed staff to:

1. Explore how other jurisdictions with similar sized boards operate regarding Rules of Procedure.
2. Explore how Chatham County differs from others across the state.

To Note:

1. Rules of Procedure vary widely, and often align with rules Chatham County is currently utilizing.
2. Staff attempted to identify rules used in other jurisdiction based off rules of interest noted in the discussion at the BOC retreat.

ORGANIZATION OF BOARD

Current Chatham County's Rules:

- Organizational meeting held only following a general election.
- Chair and Vice Chair elected and re-elected annually.
- Chair serves until the next election-related organizational meeting.
- If neither the Chair or the Vice Chair were reelected in the general election, the duty will fall to commissioners who have already been sworn in and shall be determined by seniority.

Rules in Peer Counties That Differ:

- In some jurisdictions an organizational meeting is held every year.
- Order of business at organizational meeting differs based on even and odd years.
- Clerk calls meeting to order and presides until a Chair is elected.
- Chair may be removed during the year by a majority vote of the Board.

AGENDA PROCESS

Current Chatham County's Rules:

- The County Manager prepares the agenda for each meeting.
- County Manager may review the draft agenda with Chair and/or Vice-Chair prior to final publication.
- Commissioners are provided with a copy of the agenda prior to the meeting.
- Prior to the approval of the agenda a Commissioner or the County Manager can add agenda items from agenda with the majority vote of the Board.
- Commissioners may request future agenda items during commissioner reports.

Rules in Peer Counties That Differ:

- Individual Commissioners may submit agenda items in writing to be placed on the agenda (without vote).
- Rules of procedure dictated fixed deadline for submission of agenda items (Staff and Commissioners).
- Late agenda additions are permitted only by supermajority vote.
- Each agenda item must clearly state whether it is for discussion only or action.
- Items lacking required supporting materials may not be scheduled.
- The Board may not take action on items added after agenda publication.

MEETINGS

Current Chatham County's Rules:

- The Board may hold regular, special, and emergency meetings as authorized by law.*
- Special and emergency meetings are called consistent with statutory notice requirements.
- Work sessions are incorporated into the regular meeting structure.
- The Board may take action during all meetings where a quorum is present.

Rules in Peer Counties That Differ:

- Separate rules for each meeting type.
- Work Sessions delineated as separate meetings.
- Final action not permitted during Work Sessions.
- Work sessions held as separate meetings, not combined with regular meetings.

***To note:** GS 153A-40 governs meeting procedure.

CONSENT AGENDA

Current Chatham County's Rules:

- A consent agenda is used for routine or non-controversial items.
- Items are selected by the County Manager, based on staff recommendation.
- Consent items are adopted by a single motion and vote.
- Any commissioner may request removal of an item. If another commissioner objects, removal requires a majority vote.
- Each consent item is recorded separately in the minutes as if voted on individually.

Rules in Peer Counties That Differ:

- Any single commissioner may remove a consent item automatically, without objection or vote.
- Certain actions are prohibited from being placed on consent (different per jurisdiction).
- Consent Agenda Use:
 - Consent agenda use is optional at the discretion of the Chair, not required.
 - Consent agenda is not used at all; all items require individual motions and votes.

POWERS OF THE CHAIR

Current Chatham County's Rules*:

- Chair presides over meetings.
- Chair rules on procedural matters, subject to override by majority vote.
- Chair manages speaker time during public comment.
- Chair may call a recess or adjourn in an emergency.

Rules in Peer Counties That Differ:

- Chair is explicitly authorized to enforce decorum and relevance of remarks.
- Chair may rule speakers out of order for irrelevance, repetition, or disorderly conduct based on parliamentary procedure. Chair also answers questions of parliamentary procedure.
- Chair may terminate a speaker's remaining time after a warning.
- Chair may direct removal of a disruptive individual from the meeting.
- Chair's rulings may be appealed, but require a formal appeal motion.

***To Note:** The Board of Commissioners establishes expectations annually, but those expectations are not included in the Rules of Procedure. Some of those items overlap with Rules of Procedure.

ACTIONS BY THE BOARD

Current Chatham County's Rules:

- Board action occurs by motion.
- Motions generally require a second.
- Only one motion at a time is permitted.
- Motions are debatable unless otherwise stated.
- Adoption generally requires a simple majority vote.
- Motions may be withdrawn by the maker prior to vote.
- Procedural motions:
 - To adjourn
 - To Recess
 - To call to follow agenda
 - Suspend Rules
 - Divide Complex Motion
 - Defer Consideration
 - Call previous question
 - Postpone consideration
 - Revive Consideration
 - Reconsider
 - Prevent reconsideration for 6 months

Rules in Peer Counties That Differ

- Certain motions do not require a second.
- Some procedural motions require a supermajority.
- Chair may rule motions out of order before debate.
- Withdrawal of a motion may require Board consent .
- **Different Procedural motions:**
 - Appeal a ruling of Chair
 - Refer an item to committee or staff
 - Postpone indefinitely
 - Lay an item on the table / table an item
 - Rescind a prior action
 - Amend something previously adopted
 - Substitute motion
 - Limit Debate
 - Extend Debate
 - Close Debate
 - Amend the agenda
 - Change Order of Business
 - Take item out of order
 - Designate temporary presiding officer
 - Remove Chair from presiding on an item

DEBATE

Current Chatham County's Rules*:

- The Chair states the motion and opens the floor to debate.
- The maker of the motion is recognized first.
- Members who have not spoken are recognized before those who have.
- Debate is intended to alternate between proponents and opponents when possible.

Rules in Peer Counties That Differ

- Chair manages recognition and debate order
- Chair is explicitly authorized to enforce decorum and relevance of remarks.
- The Chair may close debate without a motion if discussion becomes repetitive.
- Debate may be limited or extended by motion of the Board.
- Debate may be prohibited entirely on certain procedural motions.
- The Chair may refuse recognition for remarks deemed irrelevant or repetitive.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Current Chatham County's Rules:

- Public comment period of 30 minutes.
- 3-minute limit per speaker.
- Advance sign-up is encouraged but not required.
- Public comment is a standing agenda item for regular and work-session agenda.
- Chair manages recognition and time.
- Board is not required to respond during public comment.

Rules in Peer Counties That Differ

- Public comment in some jurisdictions is not provided at work sessions; allowed only at regular meetings.
- Public comment is not required at every meeting(N.C.G.S. 153A-52.1, states that the Board must provide one opportunity for public comment each month at a regular meeting).
- Speakers who miss the time cutoff are not carried forward to the next meeting.
- Different time limits based on board discretion.
- Chair may end public comment once time-limit expires.
- The Board may prohibit responses or dialogue during public comment by rule.

ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER

Current Chatham County's Rules:

- Does not make reference to Robert's Rules of Order.
- § 153A-41. Procedures. The board of commissioners may adopt its own rules of procedure, in keeping with the size and nature of the board and in the spirit of generally accepted principles of parliamentary procedure.

Rules in Peer Counties That Differ:

- Several Jurisdictions make reference to Robert's Rules of Order in which case some of the items noted from those jurisdictions are (usage varies widely):
 - Robert's Rules are adopted only as a fallback, used only when local rules are silent.
 - Robert's Rules are adopted with explicit exclusions (certain chapters or motions do not apply).
 - Robert's Rules apply only to Board action, not to public comment or staff presentations.
 - Robert's Rules apply only to substantive motions, not procedural ones.
 - The Chair is authorized to deviate from Robert's Rules to maintain order or efficiency.
 - Robert's Rules are subordinate to Board custom and practice.
 - Robert's Rules may be temporarily suspended by Board vote.
 - A specific edition of Robert's Rules is named and fixed.

QUESTIONS?