

ORDINANCE O.2239-2024

EXPLANATION: This Ordinance amends Section 2-2 entitled “Township Council” of Chapter II entitled “Administration” in order to establish firm rules of decorum for conduct at Township Council meetings.

WHEREAS, the Township of Edison (hereinafter referred to as the “Township”) is a public body corporate and politic in the County of Middlesex, State of New Jersey; and

WHEREAS, the public are encouraged to speak at all open meetings of the Township in accordance with the provisions of the Municipal Code of the Township of Edison; and

WHEREAS, the Township Council wishes to clarify and expand upon the rules of decorum for conduct at public meetings to preserve good order and encourage meaningful participation by the public; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED, by the Township Council of the Township of Edison, County of Middlesex, State of New Jersey that Chapter 2 entitled “Administration” is hereby amended to read as follows:

Deletions are noted by ~~strike throughs~~

Additions are indicated in **bold underline**

Language that remains unchanged is not highlighted in any way

SECTION I.

Section 2-2.14 entitled “Decorum” is hereby amended to read as follows:

a. Meetings of the Township Council shall be conducted in an orderly manner to ensure that the public has a full opportunity to be heard and that the deliberative process is retained at all times. The Council President or presiding officer shall be responsible for maintaining the good order and decorum of the meetings.

b. Council Relations. A cooperative attitude along with courtesy and respect between Council members are necessary ingredients for full consideration of adverse viewpoints no matter how strongly held, for smooth transaction of the Council business, and for the promotion and preservation of public respect and confidence for the Council. It is, therefore, incumbent upon each Council member to be cooperative, courteous and respectful to other Council members, Directors, municipal officials or professionals hired on behalf of the Township, by their words, behavior, and considerate listening, particularly during controversy, disagreement, or expression of divergent view.

~~Any person making personal, impertinent or slanderous remarks or who becomes boisterous shall be barred by the presiding officer from further attendance at the meeting of the Council. On request of the presiding officer, any individual not in compliance with standards of behavior of Council meetings shall be escorted from the chamber.~~

c. The Chief of Police or his/her designee shall be sergeant at arms of the Council meetings and shall be present at the Council meetings. The sergeant at arms shall carry out all orders and instructions given by the presiding officer for the purpose of maintaining order and decorum at the Council meetings.

~~All citizens shall conduct themselves in an appropriate manner.~~

d. There shall be no food or beverage in the Council chambers while the Council is in session.

e. No animal shall be permitted in the Council chambers at any time, without Council approval except for a seeing eye dog accompanying a person who is blind.

f. The members of the Township Council and administration shall:

1. Fully participate in Township Council meetings and other public forums while demonstrating respect, kindness, consideration and courtesy to others.

2. Prepare in advance of Council meetings and be familiar with issues on the agenda.

3. Be respectful of other people's time. Stay focused and act efficiently during public meetings.
4. Serve as a model of leadership and civility to the community.
5. Practice civility and decorum in discussions and debate.
6. Treat all staff as professionals.
7. Never publicly criticize an individual employee.
8. Be welcoming to speakers and treat them with care and gentleness.
9. Do not take advantage of services or opportunities for personal gain because of their position.
10. Keep confidential information concerning property and personnel private, unless legal permission is given.
11. Refrain from using non-authorized resources such as equipment and supplies which are not available to the public.

- g. Addressing the Meeting: No person shall address the meeting without first being recognized by the Council President. Each person so recognized shall step to the podium provided for the use of the public and shall state his or her name and address; the organization, if any, which he or she represents; and, if during the open public session of the meeting, the subject he or she wishes to discuss. Children under 18 shall not be required to give their last name or address.**
- h. Each person addressing the Township Council shall do so in an orderly manner. Any person who utters physically threatening, patently offensive or abusive language, or engages in any other conduct which disrupts, disturbs or otherwise impedes the orderly conduct of any meeting shall, at the discretion of the Council President, presiding officer, or a majority of the Council, be first asked to refrain from such conduct and shall receive a warning.**
- i. If, after receiving a warning from the Council President, presiding officer or the majority of the Council, a person persists in conduct which violates the rules of decorum or impedes or disrupts the orderly conduct of the meeting, their remaining time allotted for addressing the Council shall be forfeited and they will be required to leave the podium.**
- j. If such person does not leave the podium or continues to disrupt the meeting from the audience, the Council President, presiding officer or a majority of the Council may order that person to leave the meeting.**
- k. If such person does not leave the meeting, the Council President or presiding officer may order the Sergeant at Arms to have that person removed from the council chambers.**
- l. Activities which shall be considered an impediment to the orderly conduct of or disruptive to the meeting include, but are not limited to:**

 - 1. Engaging in disorderly conduct such as the utterance of loud, physically threatening, abusive, or excessively vulgar language, or other acts which disturb, disrupt or otherwise impede the orderly conduct of any meeting and the ability of the public to hear or participate;**
 - 2. Speaking without being first recognized by the Chair, or attempting to address Council outside of the permitted periods for public comment;**
 - 3. The use of patently offensive or abusive language;**
 - 4. The wearing of costumes or non-medically necessary masks while addressing the Council;**
 - 5. The use of props while addressing the Council;**

6. Comments, performances or other behavior clearly intended to cause disruption by failing to address a matter of concern to the residents of the municipality.

m. If a meeting is disturbed or disrupted in such a manner as to make the restoration of order infeasible or improbable, the meeting may be adjourned or continued by the Council President or a majority of the members, and any remaining business may be considered at the next meeting.

SECTION II.

This ordinance shall take effect twenty (20) days after adoption and approval by the Mayor in accordance with N.J.S.A. 40:69A:181(b).

SECTION III.

All ordinances or parts of ordinances in conflict with the provisions of this ordinance are hereby repealed.