



ATLANTA REGIONAL COMMISSION

Policy for Citizen Input

Public Comment at ARC's Regularly Scheduled Board and Policy Committee Meetings

The Atlanta Regional Commission welcomes advice, suggestions and ideas about regional issues from interested citizens and groups. There are many opportunities and levels of involvement for citizens related to public policy development. ARC encourages citizens to be involved throughout the decision-making process, including local government levels where early stages of policy formation often occur.

The Atlanta Regional Commission Board and its policy committees have regularly scheduled meetings. Each of these meetings is open to the public and includes an opportunity for citizen input as noted on the meeting agenda. The following policy describes what the public can expect in terms of notification, agendas, public comment procedures, presentation materials and documentation of public comment. All meetings are conducted pursuant to the Georgia Open Meetings Laws.

Public Notification

Public notification of ARC Board meetings is provided in advance of the meeting. ARC publishes annual year-at-a-glance and monthly month-at-a-glance calendars of planned meeting dates and keeps these documents current throughout the year. The meetings-at-a-glance materials are emailed to ARC board members and local jurisdictions as well as posted on ARC's website at www.atlantaregional.com/about-us/board—committees.

The annual calendar of meetings remains fairly constant from year-to-year. The Board meeting is scheduled at 1:00 p.m. on the fourth Wednesday of each month, January through October, and on the first Wednesday in December. Dates and times of meetings are also included in each Board Meeting agenda.

Policy committee meeting calendar details are posted on each committee page on the ARC web site, and changes that occur to the planned meeting schedule are posted on these same pages at least one week in advance of the meeting unless emergency conditions dictate otherwise.

Agendas

Per ARC Bylaws, board meeting agendas are mailed or sent electronically to board members and are posted on ARC's website at least 7 days in advance of all regularly scheduled meetings. Changes to the agenda may be made up to the day of the meeting; however, no major action or decision items may be added to the agenda within three days of the meeting. If action or decision items are added after the agenda packet is sent, all board members are notified of the changes at least 48 hours prior to the meeting. Items added within three days of the meeting must be for discussion purposes only. The board must declare an emergency to make exceptions to these provisions.

Policy committee agendas are also mailed or sent electronically to committee members and posted on the website at least 7 days in advance of meetings.

Public Comment

A public comment period is part of each meeting of the Board and Policy committees. Public comment can lead to board discussion, which is often incorporated into recommendations and decisions. To make a public comment, it is necessary to sign in during the 30 minutes prior to the start of the meetings. Sign-in cards will be available at each meeting.

Prior to the ARC Board meeting, commenters are encouraged to provide written comment, via fax, e-mail, or U.S. mail addressed to the ARC Office of the Executive Director, for distribution to board members as part of their agenda packet.

Prior notification of intent to request to speak is also encouraged and should be directed to the ARC Office of the Executive Director, preferably no less than 5 days before the meeting.

The ARC Board meetings are open to the public and time is allowed for the public to ask questions or offer comments. Ten (10) minutes at the beginning of the Board Meeting are designated for public comments without obtaining a vote of the board, based on the commenter signing up to speak prior to the meeting. Each speaker is allotted two minutes for their comments.

This time allotment and the overall time allowed for public comment can be modified by the ARC Board Chair or a majority vote of the Commission members present. If unable to speak to the Board due to time restrictions, commenters are encouraged to provide their comment in writing.

ARC Policy Committees serve as the working committees of the ARC Board. These groups meet to consider specific subjects required by regulation, referred to them by staff, the Commission or initiated by the committee itself. All Policy Committee meetings are open to the public and time is allowed for the public to ask questions or offer comments. Ten (10) minutes at the beginning of each Committee meeting are designated for the public to address the Committee on any agenda item without obtaining a vote of the Committee. If unable to speak to the Committee due to time restrictions, commenters are encouraged to provide their comments in writing. Any change to the designated time allotment requires committee discussion and action.

When public comments are heard by the policy committees, a summary of public comments presented to a committee will be made part of the committee meeting notes. At the discretion of the committee chair, a brief verbal summary of such comments will be brought to the Board's attention.

Sometimes regulatory requirements prescribe official public review and comment periods where public input is solicited on Plan or Policy documents. In these instances, ARC will host official public review and comment periods to obtain input on draft plans and programs. When the planning process requires a formal public hearing, one of the hearings will be held before the pertinent policy committee or full Board at the beginning of their regularly scheduled meeting(s).

Comments are generally accepted either in writing during the comment period or orally at public hearing(s). In instances when an official public review and comment period is held, the full Board and policy committee, as appropriate, will be given the opportunity to discuss the comments received prior to making any decisions or voting to adopt the plan or policy.

Presentation Materials

ARC uses presentation materials, such as maps, charts, graphs, illustrations, PowerPoint slides and videos to explain data and concepts at Board meetings. ARC may also use handouts and posters to display visual information. The ARC boardroom is equipped with projectors, and sound systems for displaying visual and audio information, including the microphone system used to make discussions during the meeting clearly audible. Materials are available electronically during each meeting and attendees are encouraged to use their PDAs to access materials during the meeting.

Documentation and Posting of Information

A summary of ARC Board meeting actions is prepared and posted on the ARC website, www.atlantaregional.com/about-us/board--committees/arc-board, within two business days of the meeting. A draft final meeting summary, based on details obtained from court reporter transcripts, is posted approximately three weeks after the meeting, at the same time the agenda for the next meeting is posted. The meeting summary is adopted by the Board at their next meeting. This final summary contains an overview of oral comments received from the public. Any written public comments received prior to the ARC Board meeting will be posted on the ARC website with the two day summary.

There are specific procedures for public comments received during regulated planning processes. These comments are documented and shared with the policy committee and posted on the ARC website prior to adoption of the plan or policy. In many cases, substantial comments are included within the plan itself.

For committee meeting schedules, please go to the ARC Web site at www.atlantaregional.com or call the ARC offices at 404.463.3100.