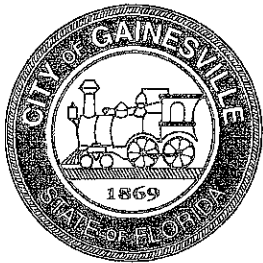


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# City of Gainesville

Edward B. Braddy, Mayor

May 29, 2013

Commissioners,

It is my privilege to serve as the presiding officer of the Gainesville City Commission for the next three years, and it is a role I take seriously. I wanted to share with you in writing my expectations for how we conduct ourselves as a body.

Regardless of party affiliation, political viewpoint or even how we personally feel about one another, our actions and words are a reflection on us as a collective body representing all of the people of Gainesville.

Our United States Constitution – to which we are oath-bound – anticipates differing points of view on the many matters before us. The Bill of Rights expressly empowers citizens “to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.” Thus, it is not expected that we always find agreement nor that citizens only flatter us, but we should all agree on our comportment – respect for one another and respect for all those who speak before us.

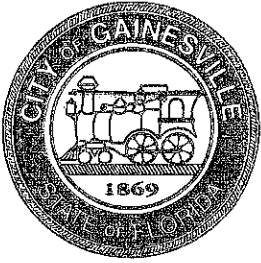
From our **Rules of Debate** (Rule XI):

*“Every member desiring to speak shall address the chair and, upon recognition by the presiding officer, shall be confined to the question under debate, avoiding all personalities and indecorous language.”*

As Mayor, I will do my best to make sure you have the opportunity to fully express your perspective on any issue, and I hope you will extend the same courtesy to me and your fellow commissioners. I look forward to *respectfully engaging* each of you in the serious work of the City.

Sincerely yours,

Ed Braddy  
Mayor



# City of Gainesville

Edward B. Braddy, Mayor

As we consider proposed changes to how our meetings function, I felt it was important to share with you my thoughts. As presiding officer, it is my duty to ensure we handle all of the items on the agenda, giving due consideration for each item. My definition of "due consideration" consists of several parts.

- 1) Staff presentation: It is important that our professional staff present information related to the item in a manner that is both comprehensive and concise; the juxtaposition of *comprehensive* and *concise* shows just how much of a challenge this is. Another challenge they have is knowing the elected board they serve is far more viewpoint diverse than ever before and making sure the information they provide is representative of this diversity. Staff's responsibility has always been to make sure we have enough information before us to make a good decision without "tipping the scale" in favor of one position over another.
- 2) Commissioners: It is important that each commissioner be able to ask questions of staff and each other in order to form an opinion on the issue and to be able to make an argument about the issue, usually resulting in a motion and a vote. *This is the essence of representative government* – i.e., officials directly elected by the people vetting the issue, arguing the issue, and deciding the issue. That is why I have been, and will remain, reluctant to cut off commissioners from any deliberation. It is up to each member of the commission to monitor their own level of engagement and determine if he or she is underprepared for the item, being redundant in their comments, or just "talking out loud" and not driving to a point or motion.

At times, I have been guilty of all three pitfalls, so I constantly remind myself to minimize these unnecessary delays that put us behind schedule.

- 3) Citizens: Another hallmark of our system of government is enabling the people we serve ample opportunity to comment on and attempt to influence our decision-making concerning the important items of the day. What makes the American system so exceptional is that, while other democratic governments have granted liberties to their people, in America the opposite is at work: the people-at-liberty have granted power and authority to government. I'd like us to keep that in mind.

For me, therefore, I believe the commission has given its due consideration to an item when we satisfy all three elements outlined above. Of course, you may interpret this differently and I welcome your feedback not just on how we conduct meetings but also on our respective roles in fulfilling our duties to the people we serve.

## Attachment

For your consideration, I have attached an outline of time windows that frame the amount of items that we should strive to cover within a given period. These are suggestions, not rules. The point is to help us monitor our pace in order to complete all of the items in a reasonable time. Being ahead of schedule doesn't mean we have time to wax philosophical and run out the clock. Nor does being behind schedule mean we must cut off debate. But, as Jimmy Buffett sings, if we can "keep it between the navigational buoys" we should be able to give due consideration to all of the items before us and bring our meetings to a close at a reasonable hour.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ed Braddy". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Ed Braddy  
Mayor