



Area Commission Public Meeting Access and Conduct Guidelines

Purpose

Horry-Georgetown Technical College (HGTC) is committed to providing appropriate access to meetings of the Horry-Georgetown Technical College Area Commission. In accordance with the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act, S.C. Code Section 30-4-60, meetings of public bodies are open to the public unless lawfully closed pursuant to S.C. Code Section 30-4-70.

These guidelines establish reasonable and consistent expectations for access to and conduct during public meetings to support transparency, public safety and the orderly conduct of College business.

These guidelines apply equally to all members of the public attending an Area Commission meeting, including invited guests, and persons attending on behalf of any news media or other reporting outlets.

Meeting Information

Public notice and agendas for Area Commission meetings will be provided in accordance with S.C. Code Section 30-4-80. Meeting information and materials available to the public may be obtained through the College's official channels.

Access to the Meeting Room

The meeting room will open to members of the public 15 minutes before the scheduled start of the meeting.

Before the meeting room opens, access may be limited to Area Commission members, College employees and other individuals whose presence may be needed to prepare for the meeting.

Attendance at an open Area Commission meeting provides access to the designated meeting room and other areas specifically made available to attendees for purposes of the meeting. Attendance does not provide access to nonpublic or restricted College offices, workspaces, classrooms or other areas not generally open to the public. All attendees must comply with generally applicable College access, safety and security requirements while on College property.

Entrance and Seating

The College may designate an entrance and seating areas for attendees when necessary to manage access, maintain room capacity, preserve sightlines, provide accessibility and support the safe and orderly conduct of the meeting.

Designated seating may be established based on the configuration and operational needs of the meeting room. Seating and access arrangements will be administered in a viewpoint-neutral manner and will not be used to restrict lawful attendance at a public meeting.

Aisles, doorways, emergency exits and other designated access areas must remain clear at all times.

Photography, Video and Audio Recording

In accordance with the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act, S.C. Code Section 30-4-90(c), any person in attendance may record all or any part of an Area Commission meeting by means of audio or video recording, except when the meeting is lawfully closed pursuant to S.C. Code Section 30-4-70, provided the recording does not actively interfere with the conduct of the meeting. The College is not required to provide recording facilities or equipment.

Still photography is permitted during the public portions of Area Commission meetings, subject to reasonable requirements established by the College to protect public safety and prevent interference with the orderly conduct of the meeting.

The College may designate reasonable locations for cameras, tripods and other recording equipment based on room configuration, available space, safety and operational considerations.

Flash photography, auxiliary lighting, tripods, cables or other equipment may not obstruct aisles, exits, sightlines or access to the meeting area or otherwise interfere with the safe and orderly conduct of the meeting.

Individuals taking photographs or making audio or video recordings must comply with reasonable requirements regarding equipment placement and movement within the meeting room. All electronic devices, including cell phones, tablets, and laptops, should be muted in order to not disrupt the public meeting.

Any requirements or restrictions related to photography, audio recording or video recording will be applied consistently to all attendees and will not be based on an individual's identity, viewpoint or status as a member of the public or media.

Movement During Meetings

Attendees should minimize unnecessary movement while the meeting is in progress. Movement within the meeting room may be reasonably limited when necessary to maintain clear aisles and exits, protect public safety, minimize disruption and allow the Area Commission to conduct its business.

Individuals taking photographs or recording the meeting are encouraged to do so from their seats or designated locations when such locations have been established, to minimize disruption.

Conduct During Meetings

In accordance with S.C. Code Section 30-4-70(d), the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act does not prohibit the removal of a person who willfully disrupts a meeting to the extent that the orderly conduct of the meeting is seriously compromised.

Attendees whose conduct materially interferes with the meeting, obstructs access or exits, creates a safety concern or otherwise substantially disrupts the orderly conduct of the meeting may be asked to stop the disruptive activity or relocate. When conduct rises to the level addressed by applicable law, an individual may be required to leave the meeting.

These provisions will be applied consistently and without regard to an attendee's identity, viewpoint or status as a member of the public or media.

Interviews and Other Activities

Interviews and other activities unrelated to observing or recording the meeting should not interfere with the proceedings. Interviews with Area Commission members, College officials, employees or guests should generally be conducted before or after the meeting or during an appropriate recess.

Requests for interviews with individuals serving in an official College capacity should be coordinated through the Office of Public Relations & Communications. This protocol does not restrict the right of members of the media to attend or cover a meeting that is open to the public.

Executive Sessions

In accordance with S.C. Code Section 30-4-70, the Area Commission may enter executive session for purposes permitted by law. Before entering executive session, the Area Commission will follow the requirements of applicable law, including voting in public and announcing the specific purpose of the executive session.

When the Area Commission enters a lawful executive session, members of the public will be required to leave the meeting room and may return when the Commission resumes the public portion of the meeting.

Access Before and After Meetings

Access to an Area Commission meeting does not create a right of access to nonpublic or restricted areas of College property before, during or after the meeting.

Members of the public may use areas of the College that are otherwise open to the public in accordance with generally applicable College policies, hours of operation and access requirements for those areas.

Access to College facilities following the conclusion of a meeting remains subject to generally applicable College policies, operating hours, safety requirements and facility access procedures.

Administration

The College President or designee, in coordination with the Office of Public Relations & Communications, Public Safety and other appropriate College officials, is responsible for implementing these guidelines.

Questions regarding access to Area Commission meetings may be directed to the Office of Public Relations & Communications.

Nothing in these guidelines is intended to restrict rights provided under the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act or other applicable law.