



## **PUBLIC HEARING POLICY**

The Spokane Regional Clean Air Agency (SRCAA) is the local air pollution control authority for Spokane County that enforces federal, state and local regulations to reduce air pollution. At times, the SRCAA Board of Directors, in doing business for the agency, holds public hearings during a public meeting. This document sets forth expectations of SRCAA staff, SRCAA Board of Directors and the public, when SRCAA holds a public hearing.

### **Difference Between a Public Meeting and a Public Hearing**

A public meeting occurs when a quorum of the SRCAA Board of Directors meets to work on the business of the agency during the monthly Board of Directors meetings. SRCAA Board meetings are subject to the Open Public Meetings Act (Chapter 42.30 RCW), and the public is welcome to attend Board of Directors meetings. The public may share their thoughts on issues not on the agenda during the public forum portion of the meeting subject to certain time constraints.

A public hearing, on the other hand, gives the public an opportunity to address an agenda item before the SRCAA Board of Directors votes on that issue. A public hearing can occur during a regularly scheduled Board of Directors meeting, or during a special public meeting held at a different day, time and/or location.

### **Public Hearing**

Public hearings provide the public an opportunity to testify (offer their thoughts) on a policy matter or a specific proposal that is before the Board for a decision. The Board of Directors considers public testimony when making a decision. Public hearings can be held during a regular public meeting, such as the monthly Board of Directors meeting, or at a special public meeting.

SRCAA typically holds public hearings during the scheduled monthly Board of Directors meeting. Prior to a public hearing, SRCAA provides notice of a hearing. Agency staff often provide a report to the Board of Directors before the Board opens a public hearing.

Public hearings will typically involve:

- Opening the public hearing
- Reading resolution number and title
- Hearing oral testimony from the public
- Closing the public hearing
- Deliberation by the Board of Directors
- Action or deferral of action to a future meeting by the Board of Directors

If the Board elects to defer action to a later public meeting, no additional public comment will be allowed at the future deliberations, since the public hearing had been closed. The public is invited to attend the future Board of Directors meeting and observe the Board's action.

## **Ground Rules for Public Hearings**

SRCAA is committed to providing safe and effective public meetings and public hearings. Public input is a very important part of the decision-making process. Public comment periods and public hearings are an opportunity to involve the public in the process, and hear suggestions, questions and concerns.

SRCAA believes all interested parties have a common goal for public meetings and public hearings – a desire for a secure, non-intimidating and respectful atmosphere that allows all voices to be heard. SRCAA has developed specific expectations of behavior during public hearings to achieve this goal. SRCAA will ask all individuals who do not follow ground rules or otherwise create an unsafe or intimidating environment to leave or be removed. If order cannot be restored, the Agency may clear the room of audience members or reconvene elsewhere.

Use of these ground rules will support productive and civil meetings and hearings.

1. Silence cell phones before the hearing.
2. Step out of the room to have a conversation.
3. No distracting, disruptive or intimidating behavior – including clapping, cheering, jeering, signs, or inappropriate gestures (i.e. the middle finger).
4. Respect the right of others to have an opinion, even if you do not agree.
5. Use respectful language. Demeaning and derogatory words are prohibited.
6. Silent expressions of support or opposition by giving a “thumbs up” or “thumbs down” for a few seconds are not disruptive and are allowed.

When making your remarks during a public hearing or during the public forum portion of the Board of Directors meetings.

1. Come up to testify in the order your name is called.
2. At the microphone, state your name and address.
3. Speak to the Board of Directors. Public hearings are for the Board to receive comments, not answer questions.
4. Keep comments brief and to the point.
5. Do not make personal attacks against any Board Member or agency staff.
6. Stay within the timeframe set by the Hearing Officer, typically three minutes.

For information on providing clear, concise oral or written testimony, please see Spokane Clean Air Fact Sheet, "Providing Public Testimony" on the agency website.