



What to Expect at a Public Meeting

This information sheet is designed to provide information about TCEQ public meetings on permit applications for environmental permits.

Overview

In addition to members of the public, the attendees of a public meeting typically include a meeting moderator who is a TCEQ employee, technical and legal staff from the agency, and the permit applicant and their representatives. Before the meeting, members of the public may visit the registration table to sign up to be placed on the permit application mailing list, speak at the public meeting, or provide a copy of their formal written comments.

To start the public meeting, the moderator will ask the parties to introduce themselves. The applicant may discuss why they applied for the permit, the permit writer will describe the technical review process, and then the staff attorney will explain the public participation process as it relates to comments and contested case hearing requests. Next, there will be an informal Q&A session where people can ask questions of the applicant and the agency's staff.

In the next part of the meeting, members of the public who signed up may make formal oral comments. No decision to approve or deny an application is made at a public meeting. The meeting ends at the conclusion of the formal comment session.

What happens during the informal Q & A session?

This is a time for members of the public to ask questions of agency staff and the applicant about the permit application. The session is informal, which means the comments and questions asked orally during this session will not be considered in the permit application decision and a formal response will not be made in reply. Responses by either the applicant or agency staff are typically provided orally during this session.

What happens during the formal comment session?

Public comments play a vital role in the permitting process. During the formal comment session, people may orally comment one at a time as their names are called in the order they registered to speak. There is usually a time limit to accommodate all who wish to speak. People may also submit their comments in writing. Both written and oral formal comments will be considered before TCEQ reaches a decision on the permit application.

What happens to the comments made by the public?

The formal comment portion of the public meeting is recorded so that a response may be provided to the comments. The Response to Comments is a formal written response to all timely, relevant and material, or significant oral and written comments and is prepared by the Executive Director's staff after the comment period closes. The Executive Director's staff also considers all timely filed comments to determine whether any of the issues raised require changes to the preliminary decision or to the proposed permit.

Everyone who comments will receive notice that the Response to Comments is available electronically. Commentors will also receive a letter containing the Executive Director's preliminary decision on the application and instructions for other opportunities to participate in the permitting process.

The TCEQ Commissioners review the Executive Director's Response to Comments and either adopt or amend it later in the process if a permit application is contested under TCEQ rules. As further explained in TCEQ rules and the pages linked below, commenting may be a necessary part of the process to further challenge an application through a contested case hearing.

For More Information

For questions about the permitting process, call or email our Public Education Program at 800-687-4040 or pep@tceq.texas.gov.

For questions about the agency's public participation procedures, you may call the Office of Public Interest Counsel at 512-239-6363.

You can also view pending permit applications, find information on public meetings and contested case hearings, provide comments, request accommodations, and more on our website at www.tceq.texas.gov/goto/participation.