



Invocation Policy

1. The Town allows volunteers to solemnize the occasion of a Town Commission meeting by offering an Invocation at the start of the meeting. The Invocation is offered for the benefit of and to accommodate the spiritual needs of the Town Commission consistent with governing caselaw and the U.S. Constitution. It may include a prayer, a moment of reflective silence, or a short solemnizing message. It is generally short, and usually lasts no longer than three minutes.
2. The Town shall post this policy on the Town website, with information on how persons and organizations can contact the Town Clerk to advise the Town of their interest in providing an invocation, and post a link to Section 2-23 of the Code regarding meeting decorum. The agenda for each Town Commission meeting shall contain the following statement:

The Invocation before each Town Commission meeting is a voluntary service of a private citizen, offered to serve the spiritual needs of the members of the Town Commission and solemnize the meeting. It is not intended to be an opportunity to advance or disparage one faith or belief over another. The views expressed in the Invocation have not been previously reviewed by the Town and do not necessarily represent the beliefs of any Town employee or official. No person is required to be present at or participate in the Invocation, and the decision whether to be present or participate in the Invocation will not affect any person's right to actively participate in the official business of the Town or obtain any benefit from the Town. The Town's written Invocation policy is available on its website, and upon written request to the Town Clerk.

3. The Invocation is ceremonial, like the Pledge of Allegiance, and not an official part of the Town Commission meeting. The Mayor shall invite the Invocation speaker to the podium at the time shown on the meeting agenda.
4. No person present at the meeting is required to participate in the Invocation. The decision whether to participate in the invocation shall have no bearing on the business of the Town. However, those present who choose not to participate shall not disrupt the Invocation, and shall comply with Section 2-23 of the Code regarding meeting decorum.



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5. No Town employee or Town elected or appointed official shall direct any person present at a Town Commission to participate in the Invocation in any way, or publicly note whether any person participates in or pays attention to the Invocation, or allow any Town official action to be affected in any way by participation or lack of participation in the Invocation.
6. The following procedure shall be followed in scheduling volunteers to deliver the Invocation:
 - a. The Town Clerk shall compile and maintain a written list of religious assemblies located in or serving the Town, using reasonable efforts to determine such assemblies by consulting the Town's Chamber of Commerce, online directories, internet searches, newspapers, phone directories, suggestions from Town residents, and other generally available sources of information. Any religious assembly may ask to be included on the Town's list, and the Town Clerk shall include such assembly upon request.
 - b. The Town Clerk shall also include on this written list any individuals who have informed the Town that they are interested and available to deliver Invocations.
 - c. The purpose of the list is to allow the Town Clerk to efficiently schedule the Invocation by regularly drawing upon the full range of potential providers of volunteer Invocation services, without regard to their individual faiths or beliefs.
 - d. The written list shall be updated at least once each calendar year by the Town Clerk, so that it remains current.
 - e. Annually, the Town Clerk shall send a letter or email to those on the list, informing them that they are on the list and will be contacted for their availability to provide the Invocation for specific Town Commission meeting dates throughout the year. The Town Clerk shall include a copy of this Resolution in this annual written communication.
 - f. Speaker shall be invited to deliver the Invocation in the order in which they appear on the list. If a speaker is not available when he or she is invited to attend the Commission Meeting, the Town Clerk will contact the next speaker on the list (and additional speakers in the order listed, if necessary, until a speaker has agreed to attend). No speaker may fill or dominate the available slots by volunteering for all or many of them. The Town Clerk may take into consideration the seasonal availability or residency of persons in scheduling the Invocations.
 - g. A person providing an Invocation for the Town Commission shall not receive compensation for this service.
 - h. The Town has no guidelines for the specific content of the Invocation, and allows the speaker to follow the dictates of his or her own conscience. However, the



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Invocation speaker must comply with Section 2-23 of the Town Code regarding decorum at Town Commission meetings, and must not use the invocation to attempt to convert persons to a sectarian belief, proselytize or advance any faith, or disparage the faith—or lack of faith—of others.

- i. No Town employee, or appointed or elected Town official, shall engage in prior inquiry, approval, review or alteration of the content of any Invocation to be offered by an Invocation speaker.
- j. This policy shall not be interpreted to create any affiliation with or endorsement by the Town of any particular faith or viewpoint, or any religious or non-religious belief.

Sec. 2-23. - Maintaining order, decorum at Town Commission and Board meetings.

- (a) The Chief of Police or such member or members of the Police Department as the Chief may designate shall be Sergeant-At-Arms at the regular and special meetings of the Town Commission or Board. The Sergeant-At-Arms shall carry out orders and instructions given by the Presiding Officer or by a majority of the Town Commission or Board present for the purpose of maintaining order and decorum at the Town meetings. While any Town meeting of the Town Commission or any Town Board is in session, the members of the public shall not, by conversation or otherwise, delay or interrupt the proceedings nor the peace of the meeting and shall obey all orders of the Town Commission or Board, or its Presiding Officer, except as otherwise herein provided. All persons attending any Town meeting shall render inaudible any beepers, cellular telephones, or other mechanical or electronic devices while such meeting is in session. The Presiding Officer shall preserve strict order and decorum at all meetings. Unauthorized remarks from the audience, stamping of feet, whistles, yells and similar demonstrations constitute an interruption to public meetings, are prohibited and shall not be permitted by the Presiding Officer. The foregoing conduct is unauthorized and, if the individual engaged in the conduct has not been recognized and granted leave to speak by the Presiding Officer, any person who causes an interruption of the meeting shall be given the option to cease the conduct which constitutes an interruption or to leave the meeting. If the individual fails to cease the offending conduct or to voluntarily leave the meeting and continues interrupting the meeting, the individual shall be removed from the meeting room if the Sergeant-At-Arms is so directed by the Presiding Officer, and such person shall be barred from further audience for the remainder of the meeting. In case the Presiding Officer shall fail to act, any member of the Town Commission may move to require the Presiding Officer to act to enforce the rules, and the affirmative vote of the majority of the Town Commission or Board shall require the Presiding Officer to act.
- (b) Any person who, at a Town Commission or Board meeting, willfully interrupts or disturbs such meeting in violation of F.S. § 871.01, entitled "Disturbing Schools and Religious and Other Assemblies," may be arrested by those Police Officers present. This may be done in the absence of the conduct being noted, or the offender being called to order, by the Mayor, Chair or other Presiding Officer. Once any person is declared out of order by the Mayor, Chair or other Presiding Officer and ordered expelled, and does not immediately leave the Commission chamber or meeting room, the following steps shall be taken:
- (1) The person will be approached by the Sergeant-At-Arms and advised that he or she has been ordered expelled.
 - (2) If the person does not remove himself or herself from the area, and continues to willfully interrupt or disturb the meeting, he or she may be placed under arrest for violation of F.S. § 871.01.
 - (3) Should any person who is ordered expelled leave the chamber voluntarily and subsequently return to the same meeting, he or she is subject to arrest for violation of F.S. § 871.01, should he or she continue to willfully interrupt or disturb the meeting.

(Ord. No. 416, § 2, 3-9-99; Ord. No. 450, § 2, 11-29-00)