

CITY OF NORTH PORT PUBLIC FORUM POLICY

City of North Port's City Hall serves as the seat of city government. The City of North Port Board of Commissioners adopts these policies and procedures for non-governmental use of City Hall to ensure the public interest and the constitutional rights of the City of North Port government, City Hall, the residents of the City of North Port and the public.

I. CITY HALL & GROUNDS (including the building, grounds and parking areas).

- A. **COMMISSION CHAMBERS.** Commission Chambers are available for use by the City Commission, City Boards, and City Advisory Committees.
- B. **CITY HALL MEETING ROOMS.** City Hall meeting rooms are available to City, County, State, or Federal Agencies or community groups for non-commercial purposes.

1. CITY HALL MEETING ROOMS USE GUIDELINES.

- 1.1. City Hall meeting rooms are available at no charge to government agencies and nonprofit organizations for up to four (4) hours of use. For-profit businesses pay a fee of \$20 for up to four (4) hours of use. All groups, except government agencies, pay a fee of \$40 per reservation period exceeding four (4) hours.
- 1.2. Use of City Hall meeting room space shall be reserved and is subject to submittal of a Meeting Room Application which is available from the General Services Department or via the City's website, www.cityofnorthport.com. Applications must be submitted at least three business days prior to the meeting. Payment (if applicable) must be made by cash or check at the time of submittal of the application. A meeting room is not considered reserved until the application is received, paid for (if applicable), approved, and confirmed by General Services.
- 1.3. In order to ensure the city has access to the meeting room when needed for City of North Port programs and to make meeting rooms available to as many groups as possible, reservations for meeting room use will not be accepted more than two months in advance and there is a 12 use per year limit per group. Exceptions are made for organizations that are affiliated with or sponsored by the Board of Commissioners.

- 1.4. Activities in the meeting rooms must be open to the general public, with the exception of certain City, County, State, or Federal Government meetings which are closed by operation of law.
- 1.5. No admission fee, fund solicitation, or direct sales are permitted. Products or services may not be advertised, solicited, or sold in meeting rooms or any City property. However, exceptions may be made by the City Manager, or designee for City programs or government or charitable sponsored events.
- 1.6. City Hall meeting rooms will be available to groups on equal terms regardless of the beliefs or affiliation of those requesting their use. The city does not necessarily endorse or accept the purpose, views, or policies of groups using city facilities. Any announcement or publicity implying such endorsement is prohibited.
- 1.7. City Hall meeting space occupancy may not exceed that set forth by the Fire Marshall.
- 1.8. While the city will at all times protect the First Amendment rights of all persons as provided in the United States Constitution, and the Florida Constitution restraint must be used to insure that normal city uses are not disrupted. Noise making devices which disrupt meetings or presentations or other normal city uses are prohibited. Any violation of this policy may result in the event being immediately cancelled and may cause the offending party to lose any rights to use the city facilities in the future.
- 1.9. The person reserving the facility must be at least 18 years of age. Photo identification is required to reserve the Library meeting room. Damage to city property will be the responsibility of the client using the room.
- 1.10. The city and Board of Commissioners do not assume liability for injury or damage to personal property which occurs as a result of actions of the client or participants at a meeting. Meeting equipment must be picked up as soon as possible after the event is completed. Arrangements are the responsibility of the client. The city will not be responsible for equipment or items left after the meeting. The city will not store equipment or materials for groups using a meeting room.
- 1.11. The user (client) is responsible for setup and breakdown of room configurations. Set up and breakdown times for all events must be included in the requested hours. Materials may not be affixed to the walls, ceilings, doors, windows, or projection screen. It is the responsibility of the user to

insure that all deliveries, preparation, and cleanup are completed in accordance with procedures established by the city, and that city staff and services are not impacted or involved. It also is the user's responsibility to insure that all event attendees, including the host, guests, entertainment and catering staff have cleared the building by the agreed-upon time. The event space used by the client must be left in its original condition, and the furniture returned to its original position. The client will be held responsible for any damage or failure to restore the space and clean the area. Any such damage to the city building, furnishings, equipment, or materials during the hours of the event will be assessed and charged to the client named on the agreement and will be due and payable before the client may be granted use of the facilities in the future.

2. MEETING ROOM APPLICATION

2.1. The application must be on a form approved by the Board of Commissioners and must contain the meeting date and time, the estimated attendance, the expected duration of the meeting (including setup and breakdown), a description of the purpose or program content of the event, the organization name, the organization website, whether the organization is a non-profit or government agency, the applicant name, the applicant e-mail address, applicant home phone, applicant work phone, the applicant cell phone, name and telephone number the person the public can contact for program details. Application forms will be available from the General Services department or online at www.cityfnorthport.com

C. **CITY HALL GROUNDS and PARKING AREAS.** City Hall grounds are available to activities sponsored by city departments; celebrations, community events; cultural, educational, and historical activities; displays, demonstrations, exhibits, marches, rallies, press conferences, speeches, and vigils related to government or public issues; memorial services, performances, wedding ceremonies, and other expressive activities. The purpose in doing so is to provide a forum to promote understanding of issues of public concern and to foster respect for the rights of all individuals.

1. CITY HALL GROUNDS USE GUIDELINES.

1.1 Use of City Hall grounds is reserved to residents of the City of North Port.

- 1.2 Use of City Hall grounds is subject to submittal of an Application which is available from the General Services Department or via the City's website, www.cityofnorthport.com. The decision to issue a permit for use of the City Hall grounds will not be based on the religious or political content of the activity, display or exhibit.
- 1.3 The business of city government takes precedence over any other use of City Hall grounds. No activity, display, or event may interfere with the operation of city government or any government agent, employee, officer or official in the performance of his or her official duties. Moreover, the City Hall grounds may only be used for non-governmental activities when authorized by a permit issued by the Board of Commissioners.
- 1.4 Permits issued by the Board of Commissioners are subject to these policies and procedures. The Board of Commissioners will not grant any exceptions unless the exception is specifically authorized by these policies and procedures.
- 1.5 The Board of Commissioners may make changes to any permit and may cancel any permit if necessary to accommodate city business or to protect the public health, safety, or welfare or if it is in the interest of the city to do so, consistent with the rights of permit holders under the First Amendment to the United States Constitution and Article 1 of the Florida Constitution.

2. CITY HALL GROUNDS AND PARKING AREAS GENERAL POLICIES

- 2.1 **Decorum.** The proposed use must be consistent with the intent described herein and the appropriate use of the City Hall grounds
- 2.2 **Small Group Exception.** Groups of 10 people or fewer seeking to demonstrate need not apply for a permit.
- 2.3 **Security.** No use will be authorized or permitted if it has the potential to conflict with a previously scheduled use or if the proposed use may lead to damage or injury to any person or property.
- 2.4 **Display location.** Displays and signage without associated demonstrations may be located on the areas of the City Hall grounds designated by the Board of Commissioners
- 2.5 **Areas.** The Board of Commissioners will prepare a map indicating the areas available for displays. No display may exceed a square area of 20 feet per

side. Display areas will be uniform as possible given the number of displays, and requested location of displays, and any permanent features located with the display location. The Board will also prepare a map of the areas of the City Hall grounds available for celebrations, festivals, demonstrations, and other desired uses.

2.6 Availability and Assignment. Display areas are available on a first come, first served basis. An applicant may request a specific display area and will be assigned to that area if it is available. If the request area is not available, an open display area will be assigned.

2.7 Electricity. Electricity is available on a first come, first served basis, and must be requested as part of a permit application. The electricity is metered, and permit holders will be charged for their use of that electricity. If multiple permit holders use electricity simultaneously, the charges for electricity will be divided equally among those permit holders.

2.8 Size Limit. A display must be located entirely within the boundaries of the assigned display area. The display may not extend more than 20 feet above the ground.

2.9 Duration. A permit is valid for a maximum of 45 days. A permit may not be renewed and a permit for the same or substantially the same display may not be requested for the same display area within 30 days of the expiration of a permit. A permit may not be requested for the same or substantially the same display at a different location within 30 days of the expiration of a permit.

2.10 Number. Only one permit will be issued to an applicant or applicants representing the same organization at any one time.

2.11 Cost. The permit holder must pay all fees and costs resulting from the activity, display, or event, including electricity costs if the activity, display, or event needs to use electricity from City Hall.

2.12 Risk. A proposed use may not pose an unreasonable risk of exposure or liability to the city. A proposed use shall not include obscenity, "fighting words," or defamatory material. The scope of the proposed use may require a risk assessment, certificate of insurance, hold harmless agreement, or contract. Such assessments must be made on a non-discriminatory basis and in compliance with the First Amendment to the United States Constitution and Article 1 of the Florida Constitution.

2.13 **Non-Endorsement.** Issuance of a permit does not constitute an endorsement of the proposed activity, display, or exhibit, or of the permit holders or of the permit holders' purposed by the City of North Port, or any of its boards, commissions, committees, employees, officials, or officers. For displays and signage not part of an active demonstration, each such display and sign shall include an attached or separate sign of sufficient size for passersby to see, stating that the display or sign is privately placed and not sponsored, maintained, funded, or endorsed by the City of North Port.

2.14 **Transferability.** A Grounds Use Permit is not transferable.

3. CITY HALL PERMIT APPLICATION

3.1 Any citizen of the City of North Port who wishes to use public space on City Hall grounds must apply for a permit no more than eleven (11) nor less than four (4) weeks prior to the proposed use. Scheduling is on a "first come, first served" basis, and applications will be stamped with time and date received to remove any potential for dispute regarding order of propriety. Applications are encouraged to apply as far in advance as possible. Consistent with the First Amendment to the United States Constitution and Article 1 of the Florida Constitution, this requirement shall not be applied if a requested use is a "spontaneous use," in response to a news item or current event that prevents a timely application four (4) weeks prior to the desired use.

3.2 The application must be on a form approved by the Board of Commissioners and must explain in detail the nature of the proposed activity display, or event. Application forms will be available from the General Services department or online at www.cityfnorthport.com

3.3 An applicant must provide a description, sketch, or photo of any proposed display, equipment, or other item that will be brought onto City Hall grounds. Any item brought onto City Hall Grounds must be consistent with the decorum due the seat of city government and with the appropriate, non-disruptive use of public property.

3.4 The Board of Commissioners will consider permit applications at the next regularly scheduled meeting after the permit application is received. The Board of Commissioners may, but is not required to, hold a special meeting to consider a permit application. The Board of Commissioners will record its

action on the application, including any exceptions and the reasons for granting or denying an application, in its meeting minutes.

3.5 If a permit application meets the conditions of this policy, the Board of Commissioners shall grant the application, if the Board grants the application, the Board will issue a Grounds Use Permit to the application. Any special requests that have been approved and any policy exceptions that have been granted will be stated on the permit.

3.6 If the Board of Commissioners denies an application, the Board will issue a notice of denial stating the reason for the denial and will provide the applicant with a copy of the minutes of the meeting at which the application was considered. Such a denial is a final action for purposes of administrative law.

4. CITY HALL FEES.

4.1 The applicant must submit a nonrefundable fee of \$25.00 with the application to cover the cost of processing the application.

4.2 The city will determine the estimated cost of providing county services in connection with a proposed activity, display, or event that are in excess of the costs that would be incurred by the city in the absence of the proposed activity, display, or event. The estimated costs will be based on information from the applicant and appropriate county departments.

4.3 The permit holder is required to pay any extra personnel costs incurred by the county in connection with the permitted use, including clean up after the permitted use ends.

4.4 The permit holder is required to pay for any extra building security during the period that any person is in City Hall in connections with the permitted use, including periods of setup, take down, and clean up.

4.5 The permit holder is required to pay for any extra building security during the period that any person in City Hall in connection with a the permitted use, including periods of setup, take down , and clean-up. The Board of Commissioners will notify the applicant of the estimated costs and may require prepayment of all or part of the estimated costs.

4.6 If the application is approved, the applicant must submit a security deposit of \$250 within 5 days of the approval. The security deposit will be used to offset the cost of any labor and materials necessary to clean up, repair, or

remove items form the display area at the expiration of the permit. The security deposit, less any offsets, will be returned within 30 days following the expiration of the permit.

5. CITY HALL PERMIT HOLDER RESPONSIBILITIES

- 5.1 The permit holder is responsible for paying all costs in connection with a proposed activity, display, or event. Including any costs incurred by the city for services that are in excess of the costs that would be incurred by the city in the absence of the activity, display, or event.
- 5.2 The permit holder assumes responsibility for all activities conducted in connections with the permitted use, including supervision and control to prevent injury or damage; maintenance of the premises in connection with the permitted use; and coordination with the Board of Commissioners.
- 5.3 The permit holder must comply with all applicable federal, state, county, and city ordinances, policies, procedures, regulations, rules, and statutes. The permit holder agrees to indemnify, hold harmless, and defend the City of North Port and its agents, employees, officers, and officials against any and all damages or claims that arise because of the issuance of a permit, the permitted use, or the placement of any display, equipment, or other item in connection with the permitted use.
- 5.4 The permit holder must meet with the Board of Commissioners prior to the commencement of the permitted use to determine the specific placement of any display, equipment, or other item.
- 5.5 The permit holder is responsible for any damage to City Hall, the City Hall grounds, or city property that arises in connection with the permitted used. The Board of Commissioners will notify the permit holder of any such damage and the cost of repairs.
- 5.6 If the permit holder cancels an activity after a permit has been issued, the permit holder must promptly notify the Board of Commissioners in writing or by email. Cancellation by the permit holder will entitle the holder to a refund of the security deposit paid, but not of the application fee paid.

6. CITY HALL LIABILITY

- 6.1 The city is not responsible for the theft or damage to any property that the permit holder brings onto City Hall grounds or into City Hall.

7. CITY HALL EQUIPMENT, FACILITIES, AND SAFETY

- 7.1 City Hall is not equipped or staffed to provide the amenities normally associated with conference centers and other venues that specialize in providing space and support for demonstrations, rallies, and other outdoor events.
- 7.2 Requests for equipment or support services must be made in advance and should be included in the permit application. Requests received on the date of use will not be honored. The city will only provide such equipment and support services as it has expressly stated in writing that it will provide
- 7.3 No city equipment may be moved or used without the express written permission of the Board of Commissioners and no city equipment may be removed from City Hall or the grounds.
- 7.4 Electrical wires must be secured by tape or other means so that they do not present a safety hazard.
- 7.5 The permit holder is responsible for the set up and take down of all displays, equipment, and other items.
- 7.6 The permit holder is required to clean up any trash before vacating the courthouse grounds. If the permit holder fails to remove trash, the city will do so and the permit holder will be required to pay the costs of doing so.

8. CITY HALL SPECIFIC PROHIBITIONS

8.1 An applicant may not advertise the use of the City Hall grounds for an event until it has been issued a permit, except when authorized to do so by the Board of Commissioners.

8.2 Persons engaged in picketing or demonstration activities may not enter City buildings. Picketing and demonstrations for any purpose are allowed in only one location at the Government Center Complex, which is located

- 8.3 Alcoholic beverages are not permitted in City Hall or on the City Hall grounds without specific authorization.
- 8.4 Camping on the City Hall grounds is prohibited
- 8.5 Candles, grills, and other open flame sources are not permitted without specific permission.
- 8.6 Firearms, ammunition, ordinance, and other dangerous weapons are prohibited, except for law enforcement or military personnel acting within the scope of official duties.
- 8.7 Gambling and gambling machines are prohibited.
- 8.8 No animal, other than a service animal, is permitted on the city hall grounds without specific permission.
- 8.9 No item, including banners, may be draped, glued, hung, pasted, taped, or in any other manner affixed to any part of City Hall without specific permission of the Board of Commissioners. The term “any part of City Hall” means both the interior and exterior of the City Hall, is to be broadly construed, and includes, but is not limited ceilings, doors, elevators, fixtures, floors, furniture, glass, lighting, posts, railings, and walls.
- 8.10 No one may enter any office or other nonpublic area of City Hall unless the person is, or is accompanied by, a city agent, employee, officer, or official in the performance of his or her official duties.
- 8.11 No one, singly or in combination with any other person, may obstruct any entrance or exit to City Hall, any office in City Hall, or the City Hall grounds or engage in any demonstration, parade, or other activity in such a manner as to disrupt the orderly flow of pedestrian or vehicular traffic on City Hall grounds or the conduct of city business by city employees on City Hall grounds or in any building on City Hall grounds.
- 8.12 No physical alterations to City Hall or City Hall grounds are permitted.
- 8.13 Use of the city seal or logo by a permit holder in connection with any permitted event is prohibited.
- 8.14 Distributing or posting of flyers and other written materials on any city property is prohibited. Placing flyers and other written materials on

vehicles parked in city parking lots is prohibited. Solicitations and sales on City property are prohibited.

9. CITY HALL VEHICLES AND PARKING

9.1 Parking is permitted in public parking spaces. The permit holder, workers, and visitors must comply with all posted parking regulations, unless a specific exemption is allowed. Violators may be ticketed or towed, or both.

9.2 No vehicle may be driven or parked on any sidewalk or lawn on City Hall grounds except for the specific purpose of loading or unloading in areas that have been designated by the Board of Commissioners. A vehicle may be driven or parked on a sidewalk or lawn only for the period of time that it takes to load or unload. Any vehicle driven or parked on a sidewalk or lawn in violation of this provision may be ticketed or towed, or both.

9.3 Any vehicle that is permitted to drive on a sidewalk may not operate in excess of 5 miles per hour. Any person operating a vehicle in violations of this speed limit will be required to immediately remove the vehicle, will be prohibited from using any vehicle on any sidewalk, and may be subject to further enforcement action.

9.4 No vehicle may block or interfere with pedestrian use of a sidewalk.

9.5 Non-City vehicles remaining in a parking lot longer than 5 days will be towed at the owner's expense.

10. CITY HALL RESERVATION OF RIGHTS

10.1 The city reserves the right to refuse to permit the City Hall grounds for any event that may compromise the security of City Hall, the safety of City Hall employees, or the safety of the public.

10.2 The city reserves the right to cancel, move, or preempt any permitted event and the city may, when acting in good faith and consistent with the First Amendment to the United States Constitution and Article 1 of the Florida Constitution, exercise this right without penalty or liability to the permit holder.

10.3 If the city cancels a permit, the Board of Commissioners will notify the permit holder in writing or by email. Provide a statement of the reason for the cancellation, and work with the permit holder if the permit holder

wishes to reschedule the event. No additional application fee will be required to reschedule the activity.

10.4 The city reserves the right for any city agent, employee, officer, or official to access and enter the courthouse during a permitted event.

10.5 The city reserves the right to remove and dispose of any unauthorized display, equipment, or item and to correct or eliminate any hazardous situation. The city will charge the permit holder for the costs of doing so.

II. **GEORGE MULLEN ACTIVITY CENTER, MORGAN FAMILY COMMUNITY CENTER, SCOTT HOUSE, WARM MINERAL SPRINGS, FIRE RESCUE TRAINING ROOM, THE FAMILY SERVICE CENTER, THE EDUCATION CENTER**

A. The City of North Port maintains meeting space in as many facilities as possible. Priority in the use of meeting rooms will be given to City sponsored events and programs. When not required for City use meeting rooms may be made available to City, County, State, or Federal Government agencies or private or commercial purposes.

1. MEETING ROOM USE GUIDELINES

1.01 Use of meeting room space shall be reserved and is subject to submittal of a Meeting Room Application and Rental Agreement which is available via the City's website, www.cityofnorthport.com. Applications must be submitted to the facility where the requested meeting room resides, at least three business days prior to the event. Payment (if applicable) must be made by cash or check at the time of submittal of the application. A meeting room is not considered reserved until the application is received, paid for (if applicable), approved, and confirmed by the facility.

1.02 In order to ensure the City has access to the meeting room when needed for City programs and to make meeting rooms available to as many groups as possible, reservations for meeting room use will not be accepted more than two months in advance and there is a 12 use per year limit per group. Exceptions are made for organizations that are affiliated with or sponsored by the City and/or Board of City Commissioners, or as approved by the City Manager, or designee.

1.03 Activities in the City's meeting rooms must be open to the general public, with the exception of certain City, County, State, or Federal Government meetings which are closed by operation of law.

- 1.04 No admission fee, fund solicitation, or direct sales are permitted. Products or services may not be advertised, solicited, or sold in City meeting rooms or on City property. However, exceptions may be made by the City Manager, or designee for City programs or government or charitable sponsored events.
- 1.05 City meeting rooms will be available to groups on equal terms regardless of the beliefs or affiliation of those requesting their use. The Library does not necessarily endorse or accept the purpose, views, or policies of groups using Library facilities. Any announcement or publicity implying such endorsement is prohibited.
- 1.06 Meeting space occupancy may not exceed that set forth by the Fire Marshall.
- 1.07 While the City will at all times protect the First Amendment rights of all persons as provided in the United States Constitution, restraint must be used to insure that normal City uses are not disrupted. Noise making devices which disrupt meetings or presentations or other normal City uses are prohibited on City property. Any violation of this policy may result in the event being immediately cancelled and may cause the offending party to lose any rights to use the City facilities in the future.
- 1.08 City facilities must be used for City purposes or for the purposes described in the Meeting Room application. Persons who violate these policies may be asked to vacate and leave City property in order to minimize disruption of other City patrons and their use of the facilities.
- 1.09 The City reserves the right to refuse use of the meeting room if the anticipated meeting is likely to be unreasonably disruptive to regular City functions, too large for the applicable room capacity, disorderly, dangerous to persons or property, or is in any other way inconsistent with the terms and conditions of this policy.
- 1.10 The person reserving the facility must be at least 18 years of age. Photo identification is required to reserve the City meeting room. Damage to City property will be the responsibility of the client using the room.
- 1.11 Any costs incurred as a result of the facility being open beyond normal operating hours is the responsibility of the group requesting use of the meeting room and must be paid in advance.

- 1.12 Clients needing to cancel a reservation should notify the facility at the earliest possible opportunity so that the room may be made available to another group. Failure to do so may result in the loss of meeting room privileges.
- 1.13 The City and North Port Board of City Commissioners do not assume liability for injury or damage to personal property which occurs as a result of actions of the client or participants at a scheduled event.

2. MEETING ROOM SETUP & BREAKDOWN REQUIREMENTS

- 2.01 The user (client) is responsible for setup and breakdown of room configurations.
- 2.02 Set up and breakdown times for all events must be included in the requested hours.
- 2.03 Materials may not be affixed to the walls, ceilings, doors, or windows
- 2.04 It is the responsibility of the user to insure that all deliveries, preparation, and cleanup are completed in accordance with procedures established by the City, and that City staff and services are not impacted or involved. It also is the user's responsibility to insure that all event attendees, including the host, guests, entertainment and catering staff have cleared the building by the agreed-upon time.
- 2.05 Event equipment must be picked up as soon as possible after the event is completed. Arrangements are the responsibility of the client. The City will not be responsible for equipment or items left after the event. The City will not store equipment or materials for groups using the meeting room.
- 2.06 The event space used by the client must be left in its original condition, and the furniture returned to its original position. The client will be held responsible for any damage or failure to restore the space and clean the area. Any such damage to the City building, furnishings, equipment, or materials during the hours of the event will be assessed and charged to the client named on the agreement and will be due and payable before the client may be granted use of the facilities in the future.
- 2.07 Vehicles remaining in a parking lot longer than 5 days will be towed at the owner's expense.

3. COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARDS AND/OR SPACE POSTING AND HANDOUT GUIDELINES.

- 3.01 Information requested for posting should be left at a public service desk and will be forwarded to the appropriate staff member for approval. Notices of items for sale, business cards, and political commentary are not accepted. All information must be approved by City staff before posting. City staff reserves the right to refuse to post material or remove posted material that is outdated, commercial in nature, or when sufficient space is not available.

III. NEWSPAPER RACKS ON CITY PROPERTY, EASEMENTS OR RIGHTS-OF- WAY

1. Guidelines for the Use of Newspaper Racks

1.01 Board of Commissioners will prepare a map indicating the areas available for Newsracks.

1.02 The areas designated will be no larger than 3' wide by 5' long.

1.03 No individual rack will be any larger than 2' wide by 3' deep by 4' tall.

1.04 The maximum number of racks that can be accommodated in any one location is 6. No particular organization will be issued more than one space. The spaces will be issued on a first-come, first-served basis.

1.05 Unless a rack is firmly secured to a 2" concrete pad, the particular organization will remove all or their racks in the event of a Hurricane Warning or a Hurricane Watch

1.06