

# Lawrence Community Shelter Public Comment Policy for Board Meetings

## Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear process for members of the public to share comments with the Lawrence Community Shelter Board of Directors before meetings. This ensures public input is considered in an organized and transparent way while respecting the privacy of LCS staff, volunteers, and guests. The policy follows the Kansas Open Meetings Act (KOMA) and keeps sensitive information private.

## Submission of Public Comments

Comments can be shared with the Board in writing or verbally before each board meeting:

- **Online:** Submit written comments through the online form on the LCS website at <https://www.lawrenceshelter.org/board>.
- **Voicemail:** Leave an oral comment by calling the dedicated phone number: (785) 251-0686. Voicemails will be transcribed.
- **In Person or Mail:** For those without internet or phone access, provide written comments by:
  - Bringing them to the Lawrence Community Shelter in person during office hours.
  - Mailing them to:  
Lawrence Community Shelter  
3655 E 25th St, Lawrence, KS 66046
- **Deadline for Submission:** Submit comments at least 24 hours before the meeting. Comments received after the deadline will be considered for the next meeting.
- **Acknowledgment of Comments**
  - Online Submissions: A confirmation email will be sent.
  - Voicemail Submissions: A follow-up phone call will be made.
  - In Person Submissions: Staff will forward comments to the Executive Director. If a return address is provided, the Executive Director will mail an acknowledgement. No formal acknowledgment will be provided if no return address is included.
  - Postal Mail Submissions: The Executive Director will provide an acknowledgment by postal mail if a return address is provided.

## Screening Guidelines

To make sure public comments contribute to Board discussions, the Executive Committee will screen all comments. This helps keep the focus on important issues for the Board and the community.

- **Scope of Comments:** Comments should focus on governance and policy topics related to LCS. Relevant topics include:

- **Policy Changes:** Suggestions for changing or creating new policies.
- **Strategic Direction:** Input on long-term goals for LCS.
- **Governance Issues:** Concerns or recommendations about how the Board operates.
- **Topics Not Considered Relevant:** Comments that address specific operational practices, staff performance, individual grievances, or personal matters are outside the scope of the Board. Examples of non-germane topics include:
  - **Operational Concerns:** Comments about day-to-day operations, such as staffing decisions, service delivery issues, or complaints about individual staff members.
  - **Personal Grievances:** Comments related to personal conflicts with staff or other community members.
  - **Requests for Specific Actions:** Requests for the Board to handle specific cases or intervene in operations. These will be directed to the appropriate internal channels for handling.
- **Screening Process:** The Executive Committee will review comments to ensure they align with the guidelines above. In some cases, the committee may require more than 24 hours to screen certain comments. If additional time is needed, the comment will be deferred and considered at the next Board meeting. Comments that do not meet these criteria will be redirected to the appropriate internal channels. This process ensures that Board meetings remain focused on governance and policy, while operational matters are properly addressed through the correct channels.

## Documentation and Review

To ensure transparency and accountability, comments within the scope of the Board will be handled as follows:

- **Public Record:** Comments submitted by the 24-hour deadline will be included as an addendum to the meeting agenda and noted in the meeting minutes as part of the public record.
- **Agenda Item for Public Comments:** A designated agenda item will be reserved at each board meeting for the review and discussion of public comments. During this time, the Board will consider the comments received and may provide responses or outline follow-up actions. The review period will be limited to 10 minutes unless extended by a Board vote.

## Handling of Sensitive or Confidential Matters

- **Confidential Information:** Comments containing sensitive or confidential information about shelter operations, guests, or volunteers will be referred to the appropriate internal processes. Only non-sensitive portions will be shared with the Board after a review to determine what can be disclosed without compromising privacy. Sensitive matters will be managed through the Executive Committee or discussed in an executive session as needed.

- **Staff Comments:** Comments related to staff performance or behavior raised through public comments will be handled with discretion. If a comment pertains to personnel issues, it may be addressed in an executive session or referred to the Executive Committee for appropriate handling, ensuring privacy and compliance with relevant policies.
- **Volunteer Comments:** Comments that address the performance or behavior of volunteers will be handled with the same confidentiality as those concerning staff and guests. Sensitive information regarding volunteers will not be disclosed publicly, and only non-sensitive portions of comments may be shared with the Board to maintain the privacy of all individuals involved.
- **Guest Comments:** Guest privacy is a priority. Comments that identify guests or disclose personal information will be redirected to appropriate internal channels for review.
- **Board Members and the Executive Director:** As public officials, Board members and the Executive Director do not have the same privacy protections as staff, volunteers, or guests.
- **Executive Session:** If the Board determines that a matter raised in public comments pertains to personnel issues or other sensitive topics, it may be scheduled for discussion in an executive session to ensure confidentiality. The Executive Committee will play a key role in reviewing these matters before they are discussed in an executive session and will facilitate appropriate follow-up actions.

#### **Review and Amendments**

- This policy will be reviewed every year to ensure it meets the needs of the public and the Board. The Board reserves the right to modify or amend this policy as needed.

#### **Effective Date**

- This policy is effective as of October 24, 2024 and will apply to all future board meetings.