



POLK COUNTY

ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY

TITLE: Use of County Buildings, Grounds and Facilities

PURPOSE

To establish a policy for governing the use of County Buildings, Grounds and Facilities, except for those that have approved event rental agreements regulating their use.

POLICY ADMINISTRATION

The Commissioners Court is responsible for regulating the use of Polk County Buildings, Grounds and Facilities.

BACKGROUND

The County has the responsibility to protect and operate these facilities, and the authority to adopt and enforce reasonable rules to regulate use of such facilities. Outside organizations may request to utilize County facilities to hold meetings and/or other gatherings which do not require a commitment of a significant amount of County resources and/or threaten to disrupt normal County activity. This policy regulates the use of County facilities, identifies prohibited activity and provides the County facilities with the ability to recover the full cost of approved activities. The County may on occasion provide these services free of charge, if the cost is insignificant and the event is deemed in the public interest.

POLICY

County facilities may be used by outside individuals, groups, or organizations (non-profit, charitable, civic organizations, local community groups, etc.) for the purpose of meetings and other activities, as long as those activities are not prohibited herein; do not interfere with access to the public; are not disruptive to official County business; do not interfere with the required workflow performed by County employees; or damage any property. In the event any activity approved under this policy is of a significant nature, where it will involve the utilization of County staff and/or resources, the applicant will be required to pay in advance all charges as determined by the Commissioners Court. This would apply in those instances where the requesting organization desires the use of County staff to operate equipment; rearrange/move furniture; provide security or janitorial services; and other special services.

Any person or organization desiring to use any County facilities, which includes courtyards and property immediately surrounding said County-owned facilities must file written request with the County fifteen (15) days prior to the activity, with a determination to be made within five (5) working days of said application. The requestor shall contact the County Judge's Office or designee for current requirements and protocols.

Photographs or filming for news, advertising, or commercial purposes.

Except where security regulations apply or a court order or rule prohibits it, photographs or filming for news purposes may be taken in entrances, lobbies, foyers, corridors, or courtrooms when used for public meetings. Photographs and filming for advertising and commercial purposes is prohibited.

Preservation of property

The following activities are strictly prohibited: The improper disposal of rubbish on County property; the willful destruction of or damage to County property; the theft of County property; the creation of any hazard on County property to persons or things; the throwing of articles of any kind from or at a building or the climbing upon statues, or any part of a building. Review the use agreement for additional information pertinent to specific property.

Prohibited Activities

Political speeches and demonstrations including the distribution of leaflets, picketing, sit-ins, protest marches, and similar activities are strictly prohibited and will not be conducted in any County building.

The solicitation of any items or events, including signatures, or the distribution of materials, such as pamphlets, handbills, or flyers is strictly prohibited on any County property unless conducted as part of authorized County department activities.

County Buildings, Grounds and Facilities may not be used for political purposes, except for the purpose of campaigning for or against a political candidate, measure or political party and the placement of political signs. Such activities may only occur during early and regular voting and remain not less than 100 feet from an outside door through which a voter may enter a building in which a polling place is located.

Disturbances

Any loitering, disorderly conduct, or other conduct which creates loud or unusual noise or a nuisance; or which unreasonably obstructs the usual use of entrances, foyers, lobbies, corridors, offices, elevators, stairways, or parking lots; or otherwise impedes and/or disrupts the performance of official duties by County employees; or prevents the general public from obtaining the governmental services provided on the property in a timely manner, is prohibited.

Dogs and other animals

Dogs and other animals, except service animals, seeing eye dogs, other guide dogs, and animals used to guide or assist handicapped persons, shall not be brought inside County Buildings for any reason other than official purposes.

Fees

The Applicant shall pay for any additional building services required over and above the normal staff on duty for the date and time scheduled for the meeting and payment will be required in advance of the scheduled use of the facility. Those entities requesting use of Polk County facilities for a commercial purpose will be required to execute a standard use agreement and satisfy all requirements found in the agreement.

Security

All events require security staffing. The level of security for the protection of County property may be recommended by the Polk County Sheriff, at his/her discretion. The Sheriff will establish an hour/officer rate and provide the additional personnel as needed.

GENERAL

In consideration for the use of County property each organization or group agrees that it will pay for all damages to any property of the County resulting directly or indirectly from the conduct of any member, officer, employee, agent or guest of the organization or any of its invitees.

Each Applicant will agree that it will hold harmless and indemnify the County from and against any and all liability which may be imposed upon it, for any injury to persons or property caused by the organization or any person in connection with the meeting (Consent, Release, and Indemnity Form).

Future use of any County facilities by an organization or group, may be refused for infractions of any of the rules and regulations outlined in this administrative policy. The requesting organization shall also abide by the rules and regulations established for the particular facility they desire to use.

Use of some facilities may be subject to special conditions imposed by the department/elected official that office in the facility. Special conditions will be reviewed and approved/disapproved by the County Judge.

The County reserves the right to cancel a reservation with 24 hour notice.

Individuals, organizations or groups may not normally reserve County facilities for more than one meeting per month, and continuing requests (for more than one date/use) are not permitted.

Admissions fees and promotional or advertising campaigns directed at profit-making may not be conducted.

Posting of bulletins, schedules, posters, etc., concerning the scheduled meeting shall be limited to official bulletin boards. Only bulletins and announcements concerning the facts (time, date, place, subject, organization, etc.) about scheduled meetings may be posted. The posting of partisan political material is prohibited. All bulletins and announcements must be removed immediately following the meeting.

All members of the organization and the audience attending a meeting must vacate the County facility by the time shown on the written request.

Only non-alcoholic refreshments may be served. Any rules and regulations on food service for specific buildings will be observed.

The County does not furnish equipment to non-county individuals, groups or organizations. Organizations showing videotapes, films or slides must provide both projector and operator.

Every organization or group will be responsible for securing windows, turning off lights, replacing furniture as originally found and straightening and cleaning up the rooms that they use in a County facility.

The County Judge may refuse the use of County facility if it appears that the use may likely provoke or add to a public riot or a breach of the peace, or create a clear and present danger to the peace and welfare of the County facility.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Requests for the utilization of County facilities for meeting purposes shall be decided by the County Judge or their designee which will coordinate use with the appropriate Department Head/Official responsible for the daily control of scheduling for that particular room. The County Judge will notify the Commissioners of any significant activities scheduled for County facilities.

PROCEDURE

Upon submission of a written request, the County Judge or designee will review request for the use of County facilities, subject to the provisions of this administrative policy. All requests shall be approved or disapproved in writing.

All standard use agreement steps and requirements, as set by the Commissioners Court, will be followed.

In the event an application is denied by the County Judge, the matter may be appealed to the Commissioners Court. The appeal process will consist of filing a formal appeal letter with their Precinct Commissioner, requesting to be heard at the next regularly scheduled Commissioners Court meeting.


Approved this 12th day of March 2024.




Sydney Murphy
County Judge



Guylene Robertson
Commissioner, Precinct 1


Absent

Mark DuBose
Commissioner, Precinct 2



Milt Purvis
Commissioner, Precinct 3



Jerry Cassity
Commissioner, Precinct 4