

**FORSYTH COUNTY**  
**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

ADDITIONAL  
ITEM

MEETING DATE: MARCH 9, 2015 AGENDA ITEM NUMBER: 14

**SUBJECT: RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE UPDATED POLICY REGARDING OPENING  
INVOCATIONS BEFORE MEETINGS OF THE FORSYTH COUNTY BOARD  
OF COMMISSIONERS**

**COUNTY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION OR COMMENTS:**

**SUMMARY OF INFORMATION:**

ATTACHMENTS:  YES  NO

SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_  
COUNTY MANAGER

**RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE UPDATED POLICY  
REGARDING OPENING INVOCATIONS BEFORE MEETINGS OF THE  
FORSYTH COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

**WHEREAS**, on November 21, 2014, the U.S. Middle District Court entered an order which dissolved a 2010 injunction against Forsyth County's implementation of its invocation policy as implemented, based upon the decision by the U.S. Supreme Court in the case of Town of Greece, New York v. Galloway et al., which represents a change in the law in the Fourth Circuit; and

**WHEREAS**, on the recommendation of the U.S. Middle District Court, Forsyth County has updated its invocation policy to address the areas of caution and incorporate suggested clarifications;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Forsyth County Board of Commissioners hereby adopts the attached Updated Policy Regarding Opening Invocations Before Meetings of the Forsyth County Board of Commissioners.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Clerk to the Board is hereby authorized to carry out the duties outlined in the said Updated Policy Regarding Opening Invocations Before Meetings of the Forsyth County Board of Commissioners with regard to publication of a notice inviting invocation speakers, compiling a list of interested invocation speakers, and scheduling invocation speakers in a manner consistent with the said Policy.

Adopted this 9<sup>th</sup> day of March 2015.

UPDATED  
POLICY REGARDING OPENING INVOCATIONS  
BEFORE MEETINGS OF THE FORSYTH COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

---

1. In order to solemnize proceedings of the Forsyth County Board of Commissioners (the "Board"), it is the policy of the Board to allow for an invocation or prayer to be offered before its meetings for the benefit of the Board.

2. The invocation shall not be recognized as an agenda item for the meeting and the invocation is not considered a part of the public business.

3. No member or employee of the Board or any other person in attendance at the meeting shall be required to participate in any invocation that is offered.

4. The invocation shall be voluntarily delivered by a religious leader or the leader of any assembly that periodically and regularly meets within the County for the purpose of worshiping or discussing their religious perspectives. Each congregation or assembly which chooses to participate in providing a prayer for the Board, shall choose its leader to serve as the invocational speaker. To ensure that the invocational speakers are selected from among a wide pool of the County's religious leaders or leaders of organized assemblies, the invocational speakers shall be selected according to the following procedure:

a. Within thirty (30) days of the effective date of this policy, the Clerk to the Board (the "Clerk") shall publish a notice inviting all churches, religious congregations, and organized assemblies that periodically meet within the County for the purpose of worshiping or discussing their religious perspectives to identify a speaker to deliver the invocation before regularly scheduled meetings of the Board. The notice shall be published at least annually in all newspapers of general circulation in Forsyth County as well as on the Forsyth County website.

b. The notice will include the dates of all regular Board meetings during the year and direct potential invocational speakers to contact the Clerk by e-mail or U.S. mail and provide their name, preferred meeting date, and contact information.

c. Potential invocational speakers who respond to the notice will be placed on a list on a first come, first served basis and maintained on a list for future reference by the Clerk. The Clerk will complete the invocation schedule and notify the participants. Other potential invocational speakers can respond to the notice and be added to the list at any time.

d. The notice to be published by the Clerk shall read as follows:

*An Invitation to Provide Invocations Before Meeting of the Forsyth County Board of Commissioners*

*The religious leaders or chosen leaders of any assembly that periodically and regularly meets in Forsyth County for the purpose of worshiping or discussing their religious perspectives are invited to offer an invocation before a meeting of the Forsyth County Board of Commissioners.*

*Those interested should contact the Clerk to the Board in writing by e-mail or U.S. Mail.*

*The Board generally meets on the second and fourth Monday nights of every month except the month of December, in which it meets on the first and third Monday nights.*

*This opportunity is voluntary, and invocation speakers are free to offer the invocation according to the dictates of their own conscience. The Board requests only that the prayer opportunity not be exploited as an effort to convert others to the particular faith of the invitational speaker, threaten damnation, nor to disparage any faith or belief different than that of the invitational speaker.*

*Carla D. Holt  
Forsyth County Government Center  
201 N. Chestnut Street  
Winston-Salem, N.C. 27101  
holtcd@forsyth.cc*

5. No invitational speaker shall receive compensation from the County for his or her service.
6. No invitational speaker shall be scheduled to offer an invocation at consecutive meetings of the Board, or at more than two (2) Board meetings in any calendar year.
7. Neither the Board nor the Clerk shall engage in any prior inquiry, review of, or involvement in, the content of any invocation to be offered by an invitational speaker.
8. After the opening gavel that officially begins the meeting and before the agenda/business of the public, the Chair of the Board shall introduce the invitational speaker and the person selected to recite the Pledge of Allegiance following the invocation, and invite without coercion only those who wish to do so to stand for those observances of the Board.
9. The Board recognizes that Forsyth County is home to people of a variety of religious faiths and beliefs, therefore, this policy is not intended, and shall not be implemented or construed in any way, to affiliate the Board with, nor express the Board's

preference for, any faith or religious denomination. Rather, this policy is intended to acknowledge and express the Board's respect for the diversity of religious denominations and faiths represented and practiced among the citizens of Forsyth County.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that this policy shall become effective immediately upon adoption by the Board.

ADOPTED at the regular meeting of the Board of Commissioners of Forsyth County, North Carolina, on \_\_\_\_\_.