



Oakland Mills Community Association
The Other Barn | 5851 Robert Oliver Place
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July 23, 2025

To: CA Board Members

Re: The Importance of Speech

Our Oakland Mills Board has reviewed potential changes in CA Board meeting protocol and ethics policy. We would like to briefly relate our experience with speech at our meetings.

Our OM Board, according to our by-laws, exists to work for the welfare of the Oakland Mills Community Association members. Oakland Mills has a proud tradition of two board meetings per month open to the public. We have always had resident speak-out at the beginning of the meetings for the village board to listen to issues and concerns and dialog with our residents. At times resident speak-out has gone far beyond the time allotted in the agenda, but it has been very fruitful. Last board year such interactive speak-out sessions made us aware of issues renters were facing and led the board to create the Tenant Committee. Board involvement also led to the changeout of the management company at one of our apartment complexes. The result was a far better response to and resolution of tenant complaints.

Over the years our board has dealt with some complex issues. Our board members and residents have had a great diversity of thoughts, feelings, and opinions. We have expressed them firmly and respectfully, and everyone has been heard. We have found this diversity to be a major strength. We get a fuller understanding of the issues and a better range of potential courses of action through two-way communication with our residents during speak-out as well as through differences of opinion and debate amongst ourselves.

Our board urges CA board members to continue the proud tradition of listening to residents and each other, carefully and respectfully. Columbia residents' annual charge fees provide over a third of CA revenue. They deserve to be heard and to influence the direction of CA, and CA's leadership deserves to learn from its community. Columbia's residents also deserve to know the thoughts of each CA board member along with the majority decisions of the board.

Sincerely,

Oakland Mills Community Association Board of Directors

Cc: Columbia's Village Associations