

## **WATERLEAF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT**

### **MEETING INVOCATION POLICY**

The Waterleaf Community Development District hereby enacts the following Policy to select Invitational Speakers to give a short invocation to begin meetings of the District's Board of Supervisors.

Absent a pattern of invocations that over time denigrate, proselytize, or betray an impermissible government purpose, a policy establishing invocations to begin the meetings of a governing body is permissible. *Town of Greece v. Galloway*, 134 S.Ct. 1811 (2014); *see Marsh v. Chambers*, 463 U.S. 783 (1983) (the practice of opening a legislative session with prayer is deeply rooted in history and does not violate the Establishment Clause); *Kennedy v. Bremerton School District*, 142 S. Ct. 2407 (2022) (activities which accord with history and tradition are permissible under the Establishment Clause); *Atheists of Florida, Inc. v. City of Lakeland*, 713 F.3d 577 (11th Cir. 2013) (the selection process for an invocation speaker does not violate the Establishment Clause if it does not advance or disparage any particular faith).

The purpose of this Policy is to ensure that invocations comply with the law so that the District's residents retain the right to open meetings with words of inspiration and wisdom. The Board of Supervisors has determined that invocations which comply with the guidelines in this Policy are consistent with applicable laws and jurisprudence.

### **POLICIES**

1. To solemnize proceedings of the Board of Supervisors of the Waterleaf Community Development District, it is the policy of the Board to allow for a brief invocation to be offered at its meetings for the benefit of the Board and members of the community.
  - a. The invocation shall not exceed one (1) minute in length.
  - b. The invocation shall occur between the "Roll Call" and "Pledge of Allegiance" portions of the meeting's Agenda.
  - c. Only one invocation shall be given per meeting.
  - d. The invocation may be secular or nonsecular in nature. Invocations may not be used to advance or disparage any particular religion, faith, or belief. Invocations should be considerate of all community members and must display a respectful attitude towards all peoples regardless of religion, race, national origin, sex, gender, or ability.
2. No member of the Board nor any other person in attendance at the meeting shall be required to participate in any invocation that is offered.

3. The invocation shall be voluntarily delivered by a local clergy-member, religious leader, community leader, or other community-member. To ensure such person (“Invocational Speaker”) is selected from among a wide pool of the community’s leaders, on a rotating basis, the Invocational Speaker shall be selected according to the following procedure:
  - a. The Invocational Speaker may not act as an extension of their denomination or faith group. The Invocation is not an opportunity to preach, proselytize, or otherwise advance any particular religion or belief.
  - b. The Invocation may not advance any particular political or social movement in a manner that would suggest the Board or District’s involvement in such a movement.
  - c. The Board shall maintain a database of the religious congregations, of all denominations, located in and surrounding the District that have expressed an interest in delivering an invocation. All religious congregations and Assemblies with an established presence in the local community in and surrounding the District are eligible to be included in the congregations list and any such congregation can confirm its inclusion by written request to the District Manager.
  - d. The congregations list shall be updated annually by reasonable efforts.
  - e. The District shall post on its website an invitation to deliver the invocation. The invitation shall read:

*The Board of Supervisors of the Waterleaf Community Development District makes it a policy to invite members of the local community to offer an invocation before the beginning of its meetings. The Board extends its invitation for a representative from your assembly to deliver the invocation at one of our Board meetings, which are held on the second Monday of each month at 6:00 p.m. in the Hillsborough County Library – Riverview, located at 9951 Balm Riverview Rd., Riverview, FL 33569.*

*It is the District’s policy that a religious leader is free to offer an invocation according to the dictates of their own conscience, but, in order to comply with applicable law, the District requests that the public invocation opportunity not be exploited to proselytize or advance any one, or to disparage any other faith or belief. Each respondent who accepts the invitation to deliver an invocation at an upcoming meeting of the deliberative public body shall be scheduled to deliver an invocation on a first-come, first-served basis.*

*If you are willing to assist the District in this regard, please send a written reply via email to the District Manager at [lkrause@dpfgmc.com](mailto:lkrause@dpfgmc.com) or via mail to Waterleaf CDD, c/o DPF, 250 International Parkway #208, Lake Mary, FL 32746. Replies should include the name of the Invocational*

*Speaker, the Speaker's phone number and email address, and the name of the associated congregation/assembly.*

*The dates of the Board's meetings are posted on the District's website at <https://www.waterleafcdd.org/meetings>. Please note, Board meetings are held throughout the year. If you have a preference among dates, please state that request in your reply. Please provide the District with your preferred speaking dates at least one month prior to the meeting date. Generally, the Invocation Speaker will be chosen one month in advance of the meeting at which they are scheduled to speak and shall be given notice accordingly.*

*On behalf of the Board, thank you for considering this invitation.*

*NOTE: all information provided is subject to disclosure pursuant to Florida's Public Record laws.*

- f. In addition to posting the above invitation on the District website, the District Manager shall send an invitation once per year to all local congregations informing them of the invitation and applicable Policies.
4. Consistent with the above, Invitational Speakers shall be selected on a first-come, first-serve basis. Should this method of selecting a speaker be impracticable at any point, speakers shall be chosen randomly.
5. If the selected Invitational Speaker does not appear at the scheduled meeting, the Board may ask for a volunteer to deliver an invocation or lead a moment of silence.
6. No Invitational Speaker shall receive compensation of any kind for their service. The role of Invitational Speaker shall be voluntary.
7. The Board shall make reasonable effort to ensure that a variety of eligible Invitational Speakers are scheduled for Board meetings. If other eligible Speakers are waiting and have not had an opportunity to deliver an Invocation, no Speaker shall be scheduled to offer an Invocation at more than three (3) Board meetings in any calendar year.
8. The Board shall not engage in any prior inquiry, review of, or involvement in the content of any invocation to be offered by any Invitational Speaker.
9. This Policy is not intended, and shall not be implemented or constructed in any way, to affiliate the Board with, nor express the Board's preference for, any faith or 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 the Community.