

**MEMORANDUM**

**To: Chairman, Board of County Commissioners**

**From: Marvin Bethune, County Attorney**

**Re: Disruption of official meetings by members of public**

**NCGS 143-318.17 reads as follows:**

**§ 143-318.17. Disruptions of official meetings.**

A person who willfully interrupts, disturbs, or disrupts an official meeting and who, upon being directed to leave the meeting by the presiding officer, willfully refuses to leave the meeting is guilty of a Class 2 misdemeanor. (1979, c. 655, s. 1; 1993, c. 539, s. 1028; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 24, s. 14(c).)

This raises the question of how to deal with (1) speakers at the podium who refuse to stop talking when their three (3) minutes of allocated speaking time is over, or (2) people in the audience who disrupt a meeting by speaking out.

Suggested procedures for Chairman:

**(1) Speaker at Podium**

1. Tell speaker that his or her allocated time to speak is over.
2. If the speaker does not stop, then tell the speaker that he is she is **"disrupting the meeting"** and will have to stop speaking and leave the **podium**.
3. If the speaker still does not stop, then tell the speaker that he or she is violating NCGS 143-318.17 by **disrupting the meeting** and is subject to being escorted out of the meeting chamber and charged with a misdemeanor if he or she does not cease talking.
4. If the speaker still does not stop and go sit down, tell the speaker that he or she is directed to leave the meeting chamber.
5. If the speaker does not leave the meeting chamber, ask the police officer to escort the speaker out of the meeting chamber.

## **(2) Speaker not at Podium**

- 1.** Tell the speaker that he is she is **“disrupting the meeting”** and will have to stop speaking.
- 2.** If the speaker still does not stop, then tell the speaker that he or she is violating NCGS 143-318.17 by **disrupting the meeting** and is subject to being escorted out of the meeting chamber and charged with a misdemeanor if he or she does not cease talking.
- 3.** If the speaker still does not stop and go sit down, tell the speaker that he or she is directed to leave the meeting chamber.
- 4.** If the speaker does not leave the meeting chamber, ask the police officer to escort the speaker out of the meeting chamber.