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Policy

The purpose of this Policy is to promote availability of public space that is not assigned to any department and to facilitate maximum usage of this space in accordance with Minnesota Statutes § 624.72, subd. 3, and other applicable state and federal law, Hennepin County Board resolution and court order. *Minnesota Statutes § 624.72, subd. 3 states: "For the purpose of protecting the free, proper and lawful access to, egress from and proper use of public property, and for the purpose of protecting the conduct of public business therein or thereon, free from interference, or disruption or the threat thereof, the legislature or any public officer, agency or board having the supervision thereof may to that end promulgate reasonable rules and regulations."*

There is a separate policy within which the Library addresses meeting rooms, exhibit space, food and beverage services and payment for expenses. For more information, visit www.hclib.org.

Reasonable time, manner and place restrictions may be imposed by Hennepin County on any individual or group seeking access to any county facility.

The right to demonstrate or assemble in public spaces shall be regulated by this Policy and other applicable state and federal law, regulation, Hennepin County Board resolution, court order or ordinance. Advance permission, consistent with this Policy, is required prior to using public spaces in county buildings.

Procedures

The Facility Services department is responsible for promoting and facilitating the use of public space not assigned to any department, and for authorizing or ensuring proper approval for such use. Reservations are required for use of public space and are arranged through Facility Services, 612-348-5133. The Communications department assists Facility Services in the implementation of this Policy.

The term public space as used in this Policy includes, but is not limited to:

- A. The Government Center skyway level, auditorium, jury assembly room, atrium bridges and unassigned conference rooms.
- B. Exhibit spaces (skyway level and A-level gallery in the Government Center, etc.).
- C. Outdoor plazas and lobbies at all county facilities.
- D. Unassigned public art space (includes space in foyers, lobbies, plazas, stairwells and common corridors).

General guidelines for use of public space at county buildings

Access to buildings is allowed to the extent permitted by federal and state law

Use of public space in county buildings and exterior grounds and plazas is limited to meetings, activities, events and exhibits that serve a legitimate public purpose. The Hennepin County Board of Commissioners may approve requests through the [Agenda Process](#) as described in the County Administrative Manual. The County Board Chair may approve requests when time does not allow for use of the Agenda Process.

Meetings, activities, exhibits and events must comply with all applicable law, rule and regulation, including but not limited to city ordinances, and they must not conflict or disrupt the effective conduct of county business. Permission for use does not imply endorsement by the county. Special arrangements must be made for such things as: set-up and breakdown, after-hours access, parking, air circulation fans, etc.

If after business hour use is granted, special arrangements must be made for elevator/escalator service, security, janitorial service, garage access, heating or cooling, etc. Costs associated with providing these services may be assessed.

Use of county space by an individual or group may not interfere with county business, employees, clients or visitors, or obstruct the free flow of traffic in any way.

The county acknowledges that groups do from time to time gather on county property without permission from the county. Informal group gatherings on any county property, although they do not go through a formal approval process, must comply with the provisions of this Policy regarding reasonable time, manner and place restrictions which the county may impose. Informal group gatherings do not receive any support resources from the county, such as security.

The county retains the right to decline requests for use of public space, including canceling meetings, activities, events, exhibits or other uses before or while they are in progress if these regulations are not complied with, or if the space requested is needed for government functions.

Priority of Use

Regular scheduling of conference rooms is permitted for those identified in 1-7 below; and irregular or occasional scheduling is permitted for those identified in 8-11 below.

In no case will reservations be granted more than three months in advance of meeting dates. On occasion, county departments or agencies may be allowed use of Government Center bridges for events approved by Communications.

Priority for scheduling public space is in the following order:

1. County Board of Commissioners
2. County Administrator
3. Boards and committees appointed by the County Board of Commissioners
4. County departments, Sheriff's Office, County Attorney, District Court, Public Defender
5. Organizations conducting county-sponsored meetings, seminars or training sessions
6. Organizations in which Hennepin County is a member or participant
7. Organizations consisting of county employees
8. Other governmental units (federal, state, city)
9. Nonprofit organizations (registered and certified as tax-exempt under appropriate IRS and State of Minnesota tax codes) receiving funds from Hennepin County or other units of government and organizations whose primary purpose relates to county-supported programs or services
10. Other registered and certified nonprofit organizations
11. Political party official public meetings, such as caucuses and endorsing conventions

Meeting Rooms

Reservations for meeting rooms are permitted for the County Board of Commissioners or County Administration. Reservations for all others will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

Exhibit Space

Hennepin County exhibit space may be used only for exhibits sponsored by Hennepin County or other units of government, arts organizations or historical societies receiving government funding, accredited educational institutions and others specifically approved through the County Board's [Agenda Process](#).

Exhibit space on county property is limited to areas specified by the County Administrator through the Facility Services director. Designated exhibit spaces in the Government Center include the skyway level and the A-level Hennepin Gallery. Communications has ongoing responsibility for scheduling and content approval for these exhibit areas and has established guidelines for use.

Facility Services may authorize other public spaces of county buildings and grounds to be used for exhibits. These exhibits must also be approved by Communications. Communications will work with exhibit sponsors and contributors to finalize content and design, and work with Facility Services to oversee installations.

All exhibits must comply with installation regulations specified by Facility Services.

Food and Beverage Services

Food and beverages served in public areas for public events must be approved by Communications and adhere to the county's [Food Protection Ordinance](#). Minnesota Statutes allow the County Board of

Commissioners to grant a one-day liquor license to the Government Center on a limited basis for nonprofit organizations only. The [Agenda Process](#) is described in the County Administrative Manual.

Payment for Expenses

Departments and organizations may be required to pay for expenses incurred by the county for utilities, maintenance, custodial and security services, or other costs associated with the building use. Facility Services will handle the billing of expenses.

Indemnification and Insurance

All outside organizations must enter into a Hennepin County Building Use Agreement that requires the organization to indemnify and hold the county harmless from any liability resulting from use of space, and to comply with non-discrimination laws and policies of the county and all applicable safety, occupancy and fire codes. A certificate of insurance is required by the county and must be provided in accordance with the terms of the Building Use Agreement. An exemption from the insurance requirements may be granted in limited situations. Facility Services will consult with the County Attorney's Office on liability issues pertaining to the written use agreements.

Nonprofit organizations must complete a Hennepin County Building Use Agreement or, if approved for selling, a Hennepin County Building Sale/Use Agreement and provide a copy of the organization's IRS Letter of Determination. See the [Facility Services Intranet site](#) for access to the required forms.

Solicitations

Charitable and other solicitations by nonprofit organizations must be approved and scheduled through Facility Services, and they are allowed only in the public areas of county buildings and grounds designated by the County Administrator or the Administrator's designee.

At the Government Center, designated public areas include the skyway level, the north and south street level lobbies and plazas and the A-level. For other county property, the Facility Services director designates the areas allowed. Any use shall be conducted in a manner that does not interfere with county business or public traffic flow, and does not create a fire/life safety issue. Organizations not complying with these regulations will be prohibited from solicitation.

Any organizations conducting sales shall provide tabletop signage designating recipients or use of their proceeds. Organizations are limited to up to three occasions at any county facility over the course of a year. Solicitation of employees in their workspace is allowed only as prescribed in the "[Soliciting Employee Donations for Charitable Purposes](#)" section of the Administrative Manual.

Photography

Photography generally is allowed in the public spaces of Hennepin County buildings and grounds. However, by agreement between Hennepin County Administration and the Fourth Judicial District (Hennepin) Court, no photography is allowed in any courtroom or area of a courthouse where courtrooms are located without permission from the court. This follows the Minnesota Supreme Court's Rule 4 of the General Rules of Practice for the District Courts (January 1, 1994), which restricts cameras and recording devices in courtrooms.

There are courtrooms in several county buildings, including the Government Center, the Public Safety Facility, the Juvenile Justice Center, the Family Justice Center and the Brookdale, Ridgedale and Southdale Regional Centers.

Requests to photograph or record in a restricted court area during normal business hours should be directed to the Fourth Judicial District Court Administration office.

Media requests to photograph, film or record in non-public areas of county buildings (other than courtrooms) are managed by Strategic Communications Officer (or designee) of the Hennepin County Communications department.

Requests by photo, movie and video production companies (whether for profit or nonprofit) to film or photograph in any county facility or on county grounds are managed by Communications.

Drop-Off Distribution of Publications

Distribution of publications such as newspapers, magazines, circulars and pamphlets, shall be confined to standardized dispensing units. The Facility Services director or designee is responsible for the placement of dispensing units and advance approval of the publication.

Bulletin Boards

Approved community bulletin boards exist in certain locations to provide information notices regarding programs, services and policies. Events sponsored by nonprofit groups may be posted. Advertising or notices by a business, for profit organization or campaign material may not be posted.

Arrangements for the posting of information on any of these bulletin boards must be made through the facility building manager.

Hand Distribution of Political, Election-Related or Issue-Oriented Literature

Political campaign activities on Hennepin County property, including distribution of campaign materials, must comply with all applicable state statutes. Hand distribution of literature in the Government Center is limited to the street level north and south lobbies, except as permitted by the County Administrator for official county purposes. Hand distribution of literature in other buildings must be approved by the Facility Services director or their designee.

Efforts such as voter's registration require advance approval by the director of Facility Services.

Public Art

Public art shall be defined as works of art in any media that has been planned and executed with the specific intention of being sited or staged in the public domain, and accessible to all. Placement of public art shall be determined exclusively through Facility Services in collaboration with Communications.

Face Coverings

Pursuant to Resolution 20-0204, passed by the County Board on May 19, 2020, all individuals must wear a face covering while in any county facility. This requirement will be enforced consistent with public health guidance (e.g., face coverings only required for individuals over age two). Reasonable modifications to this requirement may be made on a case-by-case basis upon request by an individual as required by applicable law (e.g., an individual who is unable to wear a face covering due to a medical condition).

Policy Administration and Enforcement

Unless otherwise indicated, administration and enforcement of these regulations are the responsibility of the County Administrator who is authorized to take all necessary and reasonable actions to achieve compliance.

Contact: Facilities Call Center, 612-543-3948