

COUNTY FACILITY/GROUNDS USE POLICY

Purpose:

It is the intent of the Ashe County Board of Commissioners to make meeting space in the County Courthouse or other county offices or buildings (e.g. Board Room, Courtroom, conference rooms, gymnasium) available in such a manner as to further the public interest, protect County property, and promote the general welfare of the community. To this end, the following shall constitute County policy for the use of public facilities:

List of Designated Facilities/Grounds

The designated County facilities available to the public for non-county government use are as follows:

1. Ashe County Courthouse (150 Government Circle)
2. County Parks and Associated Facilities (note – this policy applies only to those uses specified in Section 3 of Groups Eligible and does not apply to normal public use of Park grounds and facilities such as shelter rentals.)
3. Other County Facilities, to include, the Ashe Civic Center, Family Central, Agricultural Exposition Center Site, Library, 1904 Courthouse, and Riverview Community Center, are governed under separate policies administered by their respective boards of directors.
4. While use of other County facilities is limited, the Commissioners may, at their discretion, designate other facilities for use under this policy.

Groups Eligible to Use Designated Facilities/Grounds

1. Any County agency, related group, Commissioner appointed board or commission, or other government-related entity, either as it pertains to the function of the group or is affected to a significant degree as a clearly identifiable group taking part in governmental actions.
2. The County Courthouse facilities may not be reserved by commercial or partisan political groups. The only exceptions are for political meetings in accordance with N.C.G.S. 163-99 which allows political meetings for the purpose of biennial precinct meetings, county conventions and district conventions.
3. Specific portions of Park facilities and grounds may be reserved for: (a) proposed use by a non-profit organization of the entire facility and/or grounds for special events that are open to the public; (b) league games or fundraisers; or (c) a commercial entity holding a for-profit class, workshop or other activity related to sports, recreation, or athletics.
4. Others not meeting conditions as defined above may, by special petition of the Board of County Commissioners, use facilities under the following conditions: Users will be limited to non-profit, or multi-denominational religious groups requiring space for a special meeting only and not as a regular meeting place. All such meetings must be open to the general public.

Rules Governing Use of all Facilities and Grounds

1. Non-County users must sign a Use Agreement and provide applicable use fees in advance. The use fee may be deferred if the meeting is held during regular office hours.
2. The applicant requesting the use of a county facility or grounds must be a resident of Ashe County and at least 18 years of age.
3. Facilities are not available to exclusive groups; meetings/events must be open to the public.
4. The County facilities may not be reserved by commercial or partisan political groups. The only exception is for political meetings in accordance with N.C.G.S. 163-99 which allows political meetings for the purpose of biennial precinct meetings, county conventions and district conventions.
5. Solicitation is not permitted within County facilities or grounds.
6. The county will not accept reservations for a series of meetings which would designate any county meeting room as the regular meeting place for any organization.
7. The applicant is responsible for any and all damages to any facility or grounds, including costs for cleanup. The applicant shall assume full liability for all accidents or claims of accidents as a result of activities taking place associated with the use and shall agree to hold the county harmless and indemnify the county for any injury or damage to persons or to property. This shall also include the times the area is being readied for the use and for all follow-up activity related to the use. Any damage or accident must immediately be reported to the County Administration Office, or as soon thereafter that the office is open for business.
8. The applicant must obtain a general liability insurance policy of not less than \$1,000,000 to cover all aspects of the meeting/event (to include any/all injuries to participants, general members of the public and spectators) and provide proof of the insurance to the County Administration Office not less than a week prior to the event.
9. The county will not provide personnel to attend the meeting/event.
10. Obscene language or disruptive, abusive or excessively loud conduct is prohibited.
11. No eating or drinking is permitted inside the courthouse facility.
12. Animals of any kind are not allowed in any facility, except for service animals in the performance of their duties.
13. Smoking is prohibited inside all facilities.
14. Weapons of any and all types are prohibited with the exception of on-duty law enforcement officers.
15. Alcoholic beverages, illegal drugs, or contraband are prohibited.
16. The applicant is responsible for returning any furniture and fixtures to the original configuration immediately after use.
17. Signs, decorations, or other attachments may not be hung on any building or permanent structure in a manner that may potentially damage the property.
18. Ingress and egress to the grounds may not restrict the orderly flow of traffic on adjacent roads and arteries, and traffic must comply with all local, state, and federal laws.
19. Parking will be permitted only in designated areas.

20. The applicant is responsible for registering the function with the applicable local law enforcement authority as well as determining the need for and providing any crowd control and security enforcement that may be necessary.
21. All uses must be in compliance with local, state and federal laws, including the Americans with Disabilities Act and shall not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, sex, age, national origin, handicap or disability.
22. The applicant must comply with any further or additional restrictions the county chooses to place on the use of the grounds or facility.
23. Personal or group political converting, recruiting or lobbying is prohibited.
24. The county manager, fire marshal, safety officer, or department director in charge of a facility, may revoke the authorization to use a facility up to or during the use if a violation of this ordinance is discovered.
25. The county manager or designee is authorized to approve applications, and the county manager has the right to waive any subsection of this section when doing so would more effectively serve the public's interest, except where prohibited by law.

Specific Instructions Governing Designated Facilities and Grounds

1. All requested space must be reserved in advance and scheduled with the Office of the County Manager or Park and Recreation Office if applicable. The Park Office will forward copies of the signed Disclaimer agreement and certificates of insurance (when applicable) to the County Administration Office.
2. Fees: Use of meeting space by County agencies or related groups as defined in Section 1 under Groups Eligible will be free of charge. All others will be charged as per a fee schedule adopted by the Board of Commissioners for all applicable space.

Statement of Disclaimer

Public Use Policy
County of Ashe

In renting, leasing, or making available the County of Ashe's facilities and grounds, neither the Ashe County Board of Commissioners, nor Ashe County employees, assume any responsibility for the loss of or damage to any property placed on the premises by the user, or for loss or damage of any property or personal effects, including but not limited to, vehicles and its contents, or for any injury to the user, its members, employees, agents, guests, or participants, all of whom, hereby agree to hold the County of Ashe, the Ashe County Board of Commissioners, the County Manager and County employees harmless for any loss or damage sustained while using Ashe County facilities and grounds.

The County of Ashe is committed to providing opportunities in access and employment in all programs, services, activities, grounds and facilities without regard to age, sex, race, color, religion, national origin, creed, political affiliation, or disability. I have read and agreed to the policy for using the County of Ashe's facilities and grounds.

Organization / Group Representative: _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Print Name, Organization and Title _____

For County Use:

Approved _____

Denied _____

County Manager or Designee: _____

Signature _____ Title _____ Date _____