

Opinion: The Edge stumbles right out of the gate

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Edward "Edge" Gibbons, our newest county commissioner, hasn't quite yet grasped what his role is.

Recently, the Board of Commissioners passed a rule limiting the amount of time that citizens can speak during the public comments section of the commission meetings. Previously, the time a citizen could offer his or her comments was not restricted, now there is a five-minute limit.

This is not unreasonable. Most people can get their point across in that amount of time, and it will prevent the meetings from extending into the wee hours, which they have done on various occasions.

What is unreasonable are the comments that Edge Gibbons made concerning this new role.

When a proposal was introduced that the allotted time could be extended for a speaker who found his time had expired but had still not finished his comment, Edge Gibbons was adamant.

"I would hope that someone could express themselves in five minutes and get their point across," he said. "If we had to stop someone, as Commissioner (Eric) Maxwell said, at five minutes and 20 seconds because they're in the middle of a sentence or paragraph, then unfortunately you didn't come prepared to the meeting."

He continued: "I understand that people want to speak before the Board, but people are conflating this as a right, when it's just an expectation. It's not a right. This is representative democracy, not participatory. We're not the Greeks in the Agora arguing, and we don't need to turn this into a town hall meeting, which I've seen in the past."

He's right, this isn't the Agora, but someone needs to let him know it's not the Court of the Tsar either. To be able to speak to and address our grievances and concerns to our elected officials is, in fact, a right. It's not just an expectation, as Gibbons claims.

The citizens of this county didn't send the Edge to sit on the commission as a sort of hobby for him to spend a few hours on every other Thursday night. They sent him there to be a voice for them. And in order for him to be a voice, he's also got to be an ear.

But he doesn't see it that way. He made it abundantly clear that what the citizens have to say at meetings will make no impact on how he votes.

"While I understand people want to come and say something before the Board, it's not going to affect my opinion, certainly," he said.

If that is the case, might I suggest that the Commissioner bring a magazine to read at the next public comments section? Or perhaps some sudoku? You know, to pass the time.

It really is a sign of disrespect to all Fayette County citizens for an elected official to declare out-of-hand that their opinions do not matter. At least if you secretly feel that way, don't pronounce it so brazenly. Even his predecessor in the seat, who was sometimes prone to episodes of bluster and showmanship, always at least appeared to keep an open mind when receiving feedback from citizens during the public comment section.

Edge Gibbons owes an apology to the people of Fayette County for so blatantly elevating himself above the taxpayers of this county who gave him the (temporary) privilege of sitting on the commission. Somehow, I don't think he would agree.



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