

Select Board Meeting Public Attendance and Public Comment Period Policy

The following guidelines shall be observed by the public when attending a Select Board Meeting.

The Select Board is elected by the citizens to perform the people's business. The Board recognizes the value of public comment on municipal issues. To permit fair and orderly expression of such comment, the procedures described in this policy shall be followed. This policy will help ensure that the Board has time to conduct its business in a professional and timely manner.

By including a regular process for Public Comment at Select Board meetings, the Board will be supporting the democratic process and helping to facilitate necessary dialog between residents and elected officials.

All Select Board meetings are open to the public for observation. The Board will strive to provide an opportunity for public input by way of a 10-15 minute Public Comment period during the Select Board meetings. The Board will also schedule Public Informational Meetings when appropriate for continued public discussion. All other Select Board meeting proceedings are for the Board and invited guests. The public does not have a right to comment during these discussions. If a member of the public wishes to speak to an agenda item, the time to do so is during the Public Comment period or at a scheduled Public Informational Meetings on the subject. The Select Board does have the right to recognize a member of the public for comment or for information relevant to the topic being discussed during the meeting; however, this is at the discretion of the Select Board. The public is also encouraged to send comments by way of USPS or electronic mail.

At no time will the public be allowed to argue, debate or introduce a topic that is not on a Select Board Agenda during the Public Comment period. Should an organization or private individual wish to have a matter placed on the Select Board agenda, a written request detailing the specifics of the subject shall be submitted to the Board for consideration and possible scheduling.

Whenever possible, members of the public wishing to speak should sign up in advance by contacting the Select Board's office no later than the day before a scheduled meeting. A sign-up sheet will also be available as people enter the meeting room. People will speak in the order in which they sign up.

The Public Comment period will be timed to allow for the meeting to stay on schedule. There is no guarantee that there will be enough time for all members of the public to speak. The Chair has the right to set a time limit for comments. Be prepared to state your business in a brief and concise manner.

If you wish to speak, wait until the Select Board Chair has opened the floor to public comments. When the Chair has recognized you, please state your name for the record, the agenda item and nature of your business.

All comments and questions should be addressed to the Select Board. The Chair may allow a question to be answered only if an answer is easily given. Should a question need further legal research or further discussion, the question will be noted and taken up at a future meeting. Any answers provided by the Select Board during the Public Comment period will be brief and no votes by the Select Board will be taken.

If you are introducing written materials, charts or other documentation, at least four copies shall be given to the Town Coordinator for distribution.

The Board will not entertain public comments about specific individuals. Such matters should be referred to the appropriate department or person.

Comments should be courteous. Personal remarks, threats, bullying or accusatory comments are always out of order. Any person who disrupts a Board meeting may be required to leave in order to permit the orderly consideration of the matter for which the meeting was called. Profanity, disorderly language or gestures at meetings are prohibited.

During a Public Informational Meetings, only the subject matter of the public meeting can be discussed. Behavior guidelines as listed will be enforced for both Select Board meetings and Public Informational Meetings.

During both Select Board meetings and Public Informational Meetings the audience shall not disturb the proceedings by whispering, talking or other distractions. If this occurs, the Chair may interrupt the proceedings and ask that the remaining public body quiet down and show courtesy for the speaker.

In certain circumstances, Select Board meetings are allowable through a remote format. When this happens, most, if not all, guidelines will remain in effect. The general public will be asked to “mute” their phones or computers to allow for as little back ground noise as possible during the meeting. The public will only “unmute” themselves when requested to do so by the Chair.