



**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
POLICY AND GUIDELINES ON
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT PUBLIC MEETINGS**

Effective Date: ***DRAFT***

SCOPE

This Policy applies to the Board of Selectmen (BOS) and all other Boards, Committees and Commissions appointed by the BOS. As used in this Policy, the word "Board" applies equally to all such Boards, Committees and Commissions.

POLICY STATEMENT

The BOS recognizes the importance of active public participation at all public meetings, at the discretion of the Chair, on items on the official agenda as well as items not on the official agenda. All comments from the public should be directed to or through the Chair once the speaker is recognized, and all parties (including members of the presiding Board) act in a professional and courteous manner when either addressing the Board, or in responding to the public. Once recognized by the Chair, all persons addressing the Board shall state their name and address prior to speaking. It is the role of the Chair to set time limitations and maintain order during public meetings, as it is important that the Board allow themselves enough time to conduct their official town business.

If included on the meeting agenda by the Chair, "Public Comment" is a time when town residents can bring matters before the Board of Selectmen that are not on the official agenda. Comments should be short and to the point, with the Chair ultimately responsible to control the time available to individual speakers. Except in unusual circumstances, any matter presented under "Public Comment" will not be debated or acted upon by the Board at the time it is presented.

All remarks and dialogue in public meetings must be respectful and courteous, free of rude, personal or slanderous remarks. Inappropriate language and/or shouting will not be tolerated. Furthermore, no person may offer comment without permission of the Chair, and all persons shall, at the request of the Chair, be silent. No person shall disrupt the proceedings of a meeting.

Finally, while it true that State law provides that the Chair may order a disruptive person to withdraw from a meeting (and, if the person does not withdraw, the Chair may authorize a constable or other officer to remove the person from the meeting), it is the position of the BOS that no meeting should ever come to that point.

Questions or input regarding this Policy may be directed to the BOS through the Town Administrator.