


Select Board

Policy Number:	SB-ADMIN-006
Policy:	Public Participation in Meetings
Date Approved:	October 12, 2021
Date Revised:	
Approved:	 Chair, Select Board

Policy

In accordance with State law, all meetings of the Select Board, its subcommittees, and its advisory committees shall be open to the public, except for Executive Sessions. While the law grants the public the right only to observe public meetings, the Board recognizes that meetings may provide an important opportunity for the Board to hear the viewpoints of residents, business owners, and others who visit our community.

Public Comment Period

The Select Board may provide a period during meetings, generally not to exceed ten minutes, for public statements or comments. This "Public Comment Period" is a forum limited to only comments on subject matters within the scope of the Select Board's authority. Those who wish to speak during the Public Comment Period are encouraged to inform the Office of the Town Manager in advance, by telephone, e-mail, or in person, by the end of the business day prior to the meeting. Such advance notice is not mandatory to speak but is helpful and, during the Public Comment Period, the Chair will recognize first those who have communicated in advance their desire to speak. If time allows, other individuals wishing to speak will be recognized in an order determined at the discretion of the Chair.

Rules for Public Comments

1. All public comments are to be addressed to the Chair.
2. Persons making public comments must identify themselves by name and city or town of residence.
3. Comments may be either oral or written; if written, seven hard copies should be provided for the Select Board, or alternatively, a copy provided by email to selectboard@needhamma.gov two business days before the noticed meeting.
4. Speakers will have three minutes to speak.
5. The Public Comment Period shall be a forum limited only to comments on matters that are within the scope of the Select Board's authority.
6. As the time allotted to public comments is limited, large groups addressing the same topic are encouraged to consolidate their remarks and/or select a single spokesperson.
7. The Chair will not interrupt speakers who have been recognized to speak, except to terminate speech that is not Constitutionally protected because it constitutes a threat, incites others to imminent lawless conduct, is sexually explicit, is in excess of the three minutes

allotted for each speaker, or concerns a matter outside the scope of the Select Board's authority.

8. The Board shall not be required to respond to any public comments and shall generally refrain from asking questions or commenting on public comments, other than to ask questions of clarification.

Select Board Members' Role in Public Comment Period

The Public Comment Period is not a time for debate or response by Select Board members. Comments made during the Public Comment Period do not necessarily reflect the views or the positions of the Select Board.

Communications to and from Select Board Members

Speaking during the Public Comment Period is only one means of communicating with the members of the Select Board. Members of the public are encouraged to ask questions of or express opinions to the Board by U.S. mail, e-mail, or by phone. Emailing selectboard@needhamma.gov will reach all five members. Whether received through the Public Comment Period or other methods, the Chair may summarize questions and answers of general interest at the start of a future Select Board meeting and/or may include some matters on the agenda of a future meeting. Other matters may be referred to the Town Manager for administrative response.