



## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT MEETINGS OF PUBLIC BODIES

The Town of Southborough welcomes everyone to the meetings of its many public bodies. All such meetings are held in accordance with the Commonwealth's Open Meeting Law and State and Federal free-speech laws. We are your local elected and appointed public officials and believe that public participation is crucial to town government. Town officials do their best to inform and to listen to the public but must also ensure that they are efficiently and effectively promptly performing their respective duties to serve the community.

This Policy applies to the Select Board and all other Boards, Committees, and Commissions appointed by the Select Board. As used in this Policy, the word "Board" applies equally to all such Boards, Committees, and Commissions. To this end, the following rules govern public participation at the meetings of all Town public bodies under the jurisdiction of the Select Board:

1. The Chair or his/her designee may devote a period at each meeting to public comment (the "public comment period") to the extent that doing so does not interfere with the public body's ability to perform its duties in an orderly, efficient, and timely manner. The point of the meeting at which the public comment period takes place; the duration of the public comment period; the number of individuals and/or entities who are permitted to speak; and the time for which such individuals and/or entities are permitted to speak shall be in the sole discretion of the Chair or his/her designee; provided, however, that the Chair shall, to the best of his/her ability, ensure that each individual and/or entity who is permitted to speak is allotted an equal amount of time in which to do so.
2. While public comments are not required to pertain to an agenda item for that particular meeting, such comments must pertain to a matter within the public body's jurisdiction. Public comments on matters outside the public body's

jurisdiction will not be permitted. Because they are not Constitutionally protected, the following comments shall likewise not be permitted: true threats, incitement to imminent lawless conduct, statements that were found by a court of law to be defamatory, and sexually explicit statements made to appeal to prurient interests.

3. Individuals and/or entities who are permitted to speak during the public comment period shall begin their remarks by stating their name and address, including their town or city of residence. Attorneys and agents who are permitted to speak must identify whom they represent for purposes of their public comment.
4. Individuals and/or entities who are permitted to speak during the public comment period shall do so only through the Chair.
5. Individuals and/or entities who are permitted to speak during the public comment period shall not be permitted to assign their time to another entity or individual unless such assignment is required as a reasonable accommodation for such individuals and/or spokespersons because they have a disability.
6. If an individual and/or spokespersons for an entity permitted to speak during the public comment period requires a reasonable accommodation to speak because of his/her disability, he/she must contact the Chair at least 48 hours prior to the meeting to arrange for such accommodation, which may include permitting said individual or spokesperson to speak for a longer time than the other individuals and/or entities permitted to speak during the public comment period.