



**Town of Deerfield
Office of the Selectboard
&
Board of Health**

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PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT MEETINGS OF PUBLIC BODIES

The Town of Deerfield welcomes everyone to the meetings of its many public bodies. All such meetings shall be held in accordance with the Commonwealth's Open Meeting Law and state and federal free-speech laws. We are your elected and appointed public officials and believe that community participation is important and vital to understanding the programs and operations of our town government. We endeavor to inform and to listen.

To achieve this objective, the following rules and procedures shall govern public participation at the meetings of all Town public bodies:

1. The chair or his/her designee shall devote a period at each meeting to public comment ("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 during 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; which individuals and/or entities 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 shall 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.
4. Individuals and/or entities who are permitted to speak during the public comment period shall do so only through the Chair.

5. Entities who are permitted to speak during the public comment period must select a single spokesperson through which to do so. The spokesperson must identify themselves and the entity for which he/she is speaking, including his/her official position within said entity, as well as the entity's physical address.
6. 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.
7. If an individual and/or spokesperson(s) 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.