

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT TOWN OF NORTHFIELD SELECTBOARD MEETINGS

Approved by the Selectboard 10/2/18

The Northfield Selectboard welcomes everyone to its meetings and all other public meetings of the Town of Northfield. All regular and special meetings of the boards and committees of the Town of Northfield shall be open to the public and shall conform to the Open Meeting Law. Executive sessions are closed to the public and will be held only as prescribed by the statutes of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. It is important to recognize that the Open Meeting Law affords the opportunity to listen to the proceedings but not necessarily participate.

During meetings of the Selectboard an attempt will be made to find a balance between hearing from members of the community and conducting required business. In order to achieve this objective, these procedures are established for the Selectboard:

1. The Chair shall preside over the meeting and may acknowledge speakers from the public. The Chair will determine the length of time for public participation and ensure that comments are appropriate. All remarks will be addressed to the Chair rather than directly to individual Board members present.
2. At the start of each regularly scheduled meeting, individuals, or group representatives may be invited to address the meeting during the Public Comment period. Public Comment is a time to bring up something not already on the agenda. In general, it is a time to listen to or acknowledge concerns. It is not a time for discussion. The Chair will determine the length of time for the Public Comment period given the length and complexity of the posted agenda and the number of scheduled speakers. The Chair, with advice from the Board members, may determine an appropriate time to revisit any of the concerns/issues raised by the public.
3. Comments made by anyone at the meeting should at all times be respectful. If a speaker persists in improper conduct or remarks, the Chair may rescind the individual's right to address the committee. Defamatory or abusive remarks are always out of order.
4. Speakers may offer such objective criticisms of town operations and programs but in public session the Board will not hear personal complaints about town personnel. Under most circumstances, administrative channels are the proper means for disposition of legitimate complaints involving town employees.
5. The Selectboard will insure that the agenda is posted in conformity with the statutes and where practical supporting materials will appear on the Town website. Minutes of the meetings shall be maintained as required and available to the public from the Town Clerk's office or the website.

