

Town of Fryeburg Policy for Public Forum at Select Board Meetings

Purpose: The Fryeburg Select Board is elected by the citizens and the Board recognizes the value of public comment on town issues. This policy will ensure the fair and orderly expression of such comments and will ensure that the Select Board is able to conduct its business in a professional and timely manner.

The Public Meeting provisions of the Maine Freedom of Access Law do not require that the public be allowed to speak at meetings of the Select Board. However, the Select Board has for many years, provided an informal forum for Town residents to speak during a Public Forum portion of meetings of the Select Board and the Select Board has established an orderly procedure for receiving information from Town residents on matters of interest to Town, and from other persons on matters of interest to the Select Board through the adoption of this policy.

General Overview: Fryeburg Select Board meetings are open to the public for observation, unless the Board enters into an Executive Session pursuant to 1 MRSA Section 405. The Board provides an opportunity for public input during Public Forum and at Public Hearings.

Specific Procedures: The following procedures shall be observed by the public when attending a Select Board Meeting.

1. Each regular meeting of the Select Board shall have set aside a period of time for Public Forum. This period shall not exceed thirty minutes, except upon a concurring vote of the majority of the Select Board members present to extend that period.
2. Special meetings of the Select Board convened to address a specific issue may or may not contain a Public Forum period.
3. Those wishing to speak shall be prepared to state their business in a brief and concise manner. Persons speaking during the Public Forum portion of a meeting shall be limited to three minutes, except upon a concurring vote of the majority of the Select Board members present to extend that period. Any extension of an individual's speaking period shall also extend the total Public Forum period an equal amount of time.
4. During the Public Forum portion of a meeting the residents of the Town of Fryeburg shall be given an opportunity to speak first; non-resident taxpayers/business owners shall have an opportunity to speak second; all other persons will then have an opportunity to speak as time allows.
5. During other portions of the meeting the Chair of the Board may allow individuals to speak on agenda items. If the chair declines to allow individuals to speak, the Select Board can override that decision by a concurring vote of the majority of the members present.
6. If you wish to speak, wait until the Chairman has opened the floor to public comments. When the Chairman has recognized you, stand, state your name for the record, the agenda item you are referencing and nature of your business.
7. All comments and questions must be addressed to the Chairman. Questions may not be asked of individual Board Members. The Chairman may allow a question to be answered only if an answer is easily given. Should the matter need further legal research or discussion, the question will be noted and taken up at a future meeting.
8. If you are introducing written materials, charts or other documentation, at least six copies shall be given to the Chairman for distribution.
9. During a formal public hearing, only the subject matter of the public hearing can be discussed. Any other matters must be addressed during the Public Forum.

10. Comments shall be courteous.

11. Any person who disrupts a Select Board meeting, or who engages in other prohibited behavior, may be required to leave in order to permit the orderly consideration of the matter for which the meeting was called.

Prohibitions:

1. No person shall speak regarding scandalous, irrelevant or repetitive matters.
2. Profanity, accusatory comments, disorderly language/gestures or disruptive behavior at meetings is prohibited.
3. The Board will not entertain public comments about specific individuals or personnel. Such matters should be referred to the appropriate administrator or person.
4. During debate and discussion, the audience shall not disturb the proceedings by whispering, talking or other distractions.

Adopted: 10-27-2022



