

**PURPOSE:**

To establish a policy of the Planning Board (Board) with regard to those persons wishing to speak at meetings of the Board.

**POLICY:**

The Board welcomes information, concerns, and opinions from those attending Board meetings that are related to matters within the Board's jurisdiction. The Board hereby adopts this policy: to provide members of the public a fair opportunity to speak; to ensure compliance with the *Open Meeting Law* and other legal obligations; and to facilitate the orderly conduct of the Board's meetings.

**APPLICABILITY**

This policy applies to all persons wishing to speak at a Board meeting. The Board, at the chair's discretion, may provide the following opportunities to speak during the meeting: (i) at a "Citizen Speak" period generally scheduled at the beginning of a meeting; and (ii) at designated periods for comment on topics identified on the Board's agenda. The Board welcomes comments expressing any viewpoint related to the topics of any particular comment period.

**PROCEDURES:**

- a. The Board will typically schedule time for a "Citizen Speak" comment period at or near the beginning of its meetings. "Citizen Speak" is a limited forum to comment on topics within the Board's jurisdiction and not otherwise listed on the Board's agenda. To ensure compliance with the *Open Meeting Law*, privacy laws, and other legal obligations, Board members will rarely engage with a speaker or with each other during "Citizen Speak" periods. Speakers will give verbal comments only (i.e., no pictures, videos, presentation slides, etc.) unless allowed by the Chair.
- b. The Board may also provide time for public comment on topics identified on the Board's agenda. Comments during such periods are limited to those related to the specific topic under deliberation.
- c. Order of speakers shall generally be determined in the order in which each citizen notified the Planning Department of their interest in speaking during Citizen Speak or during specific agenda items. The Chairman retains the discretion to determine the order in which the speakers address the Board.
  - **ONLINE (i.e., ZOOM) MEETINGS:** Once the Board agenda is published, persons wishing to provide comments to the Board are encouraged to contact the

Planning Department (by phone and/or email) and mention their interest in speaking at an upcoming meeting. Speaking requests should identify the speaker (including for example name, address and/or affiliation with the Town, and contact information) and state whether the comment is about a specific topic on the Board's published agenda or a general "Citizen Speak" comment. During the meeting, staff will generally call on citizens in the order that notification to the Planning Department is made. Pre-registration is not required and citizens who did not pre-register will be permitted to speak during any remaining time available in the public comments period.

- IN-PERSON MEETINGS: Persons wishing to provide comments to the Board shall first sign the sign-in sheet provided by the Board. During the meeting, citizens will generally be recognized in the order of registration on the sign-in sheet.
- d. After being recognized to speak by the chairman or acting chairman speakers shall verbally identify themselves by name and address (or affiliation with the Town, group or organization). For online meetings speakers are also encouraged to turn on their camera.
- e. All comments shall be addressed to or through the chair or acting chair of the Board.
- f. Each Citizen Speak comment period shall not exceed 15 minutes and each speaker shall not exceed three minutes, unless otherwise determined by the chair.
- g. Comment periods as part of specific agenda topics can be longer than 15 minutes, at the discretion of the chair, based on the number of citizens giving notice of their intention to speak and the importance and complexity of the topic. Each speaker shall not exceed three minutes, but may be extended at the discretion of the chair.
- h. At public hearings to discuss potential bylaw changes, the comment period shall be longer to allow all interested citizens the opportunity to speak on the proposal. The chair can limit speakers, as appropriate, if comments are repetitive. Each speaker shall not exceed three minutes, but may be extended at the discretion of the chair.
- i. Members of the public are encouraged to keep their comments respectful, despite any differences of opinion on the matters discussed. Threats of violence or comments inciting imminent lawlessness are not allowed. Members of the public shall not disrupt a meeting by interrupting individuals who have been authorized by the chair to speak.

The chair shall provide at least one verbal warning to a speaker if they make a disruptive comment or engage in disruptive conduct. If, after at least one verbal warning, the speaker persists in making disruptive comments or engaging in disruptive conduct, the chair may end that person's privilege of address for that meeting.

#### **DEFINITIONS:**

**In-person Meeting:** A meeting of a public body that is open and physically accessible to the public, with all participants physically present together in the same place, not on internet, conference call, or video conference.

**Hybrid Meeting:** A meeting conducted with a subset of the participants attending the meeting in person, while other participants are provided an adequate alternative means of joining the meeting, without limitation, providing public access through telephone, internet, or satellite enabled audio or video conferencing or any other technology that enables the public to clearly follow the proceedings of the public body in real time.

**Remote Meeting:** A meeting conducted with all members of the public body and public participants attending remotely through telephone, internet, or satellite enabled audio or video conferencing or any other technology that enables the public to clearly follow the proceedings of the public body in real time.

#### **REGULATORY / STATUTORY REFERENCES**

Massachusetts G.L. c.30A, §20.

Administrative  
Policy and  
Procedure

Planning Board  
Public Comment Policy  
  
Approved June 3, 2024

**APPROVED BY PLANNING BOARD**

<i>Chair</i>	Thomas Taylor	_____
<i>Vice Chair</i>	Kathleen Woodward	_____
<i>Secretary</i>	Marc Charney	_____
	Patricia Mallett	_____
	James Roberti	_____

Original date: 6/3/24