

TOWN OF HARRISON



SELECT BOARD MEETING RULES/PUBLIC PARTICIPATION POLICY

This Public Participation at Board Meetings Policy passed by the Board of Selectmen on October 8, 2020 shall supersede any previous Public Participation at Board Meetings policy in place prior to this date.

SELECT BOARD MEETING RULES/ PUBLIC PARTICIPATION POLICY

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 Board meetings are conducted to carry on the official business of the Town of Harrison. All regular, special and emergency meetings of the Board are open to the public. The public is cordially invited to attend and participate in Board meetings as provided in this policy.

2 SCOPE

- 2.1 Although Board meetings are not public forums, the Board will provide appropriate opportunities for citizens to express opinions and concerns.
- 2.2 The intent is to allow a fair and adequate opportunity for the public to be heard and to provide adequate time for the Board to obtain information and opinion on subjects before it, while ensuring that the time allowed for public discussion does not interfere with the fulfillment of the scheduled agenda.
- 2.3 During the time allotted for public participation, members of the public may speak on any subject directly related to the operations of the Town, except for personnel matters or complaints concerning specific employees, which shall be addressed through established policies and procedures.

3 GUIDELINES

- 3.1 The Select Board is elected by the citizens of Harrison to perform the people's business. The Board recognizes the value of public comment on municipal issues. To permit fair and orderly expression of such comment, the procedures described in this brochure shall be followed to ensure that the Board has time to conduct its business in a professional and timely manner.
- 3.2 All Select Board meetings are open to the public for observation. The Board provides an opportunity for public input during *Public Participation* and at *Public Hearings*. All other proceedings are for the Board only and the public does not have a right to comment during these items. If a member of the public wishes to speak to an agenda item, the only time to do so is during *Public Comment* or, if there is a public hearing on the subject, while comments are being allowed.
- 3.3 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 and nature of your business.
- 3.4 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.
- 3.5 If you are introducing written materials, charts or other documentation, at least six copies shall be given to the Chairman for distribution.
- 3.6 The Board will not entertain public comments about specific individuals. Such matters should be referred to the Town Manager.

- 3.7 The Chairman has the right to set a time limit for comments. Be prepared to state your business in a brief and concise manner. A person shall have one opportunity to speak on an issue.
- 3.8 During a public hearing, only the subject matter of the public hearing can be discussed. Any other matters must be addressed during open forum.
- 3.9 Comments should be courteous. Personal remarks or accusatory comments are always out of order. Any person who disrupts a Board meeting may be required to leave in order to permit the orderly consideration of the matter for which the meeting was called. Profanity, disorderly language or gestures at meetings are prohibited.
- 3.10 During the debate and discussion, the audience shall not disturb the proceedings by whispering, talking or other distractions. If this occurs, the Chairman may interrupt the speaker and ask that the body quiet down and show courtesy for the speaker.

4 RULES

- 4.1 Citizens and employees of the Town are welcome to participate as provided in this policy. Others may be recognized to speak at the Chair's discretion.
- 4.2 At no time will the public be allowed to argue, debate or introduce a topic that is not on a Select Board Agenda. Should an organization or private individual wish to have a matter placed on the Select Board agenda, a written request detailing the specifics of the subject shall be submitted to the Town Manager for consideration.
- 4.3 Individual employees and/or employee groups will not be permitted to discuss matters for which complaint or grievance procedures are provided.
- 4.4 The Chair may limit the time allotted for comments on a particular topic as well as the time each individual may speak.
- 4.5 In the event of a sizeable audience, the Chair may require persons interested in speaking to sign up so they may be called on in a fair and efficient manner.
- 4.6 During the time set aside for public participation, the Chair will be responsible for recognizing all speakers, who must identify themselves as they begin talking.
- 4.7 Speakers are not permitted to share gossip, make defamatory comments, or use abusive or vulgar language.
- 4.8 The Chair may limit repetitive statements and comments.
- 4.9 All speakers are to address the Chair and direct questions or comments to particular Board members or the Town Manager only with approval of the Chair. Requests for information or concerns that require further research may be referred to the Town Manager to be addressed at a later time.

- 4.10 Members of the Board and the Town Manager may ask questions of any person who addresses the Board but are expected to refrain from arguing or debating issues.
- 4.11 No complaints or allegations will be allowed at Board meetings concerning any person employed by the Town. Personnel matters or complaints concerning employees or staff issues will not be considered in a public meeting but will be referred through established policies and procedures.
- 4.12 In order to make efficient use of meeting time, the Board discourages duplication or repetition of comments to the Board. The Board requests that groups or organizations be represented by designated spokespersons.
- 4.13 The Chair has the authority to stop any presentation that violates these guidelines or the privacy rights of others.
- 4.14 Persons who disrupt the meeting may be asked to leave, and the Chair may request law enforcement assistance as necessary to restore order.

5 AGENDAS

- 5.1 Shall be published in advance of each meeting in accordance with Board policy.
- 5.2 Copies will be posted and/or available prior to regular meetings, at the Town Office. Anyone desiring additional information about an agenda item should direct such inquiries to the office of the Town Manager.