

Pembroke Public Comment Policy

The purpose of a public comment period at meetings of the Select Board is to provide an opportunity for the residents of Pembroke or other persons to provide feedback or information to the Board regarding town initiatives, operations, services and programs. The Board welcomes this information along with concerns and opinions from those attending Board meetings. To allow speakers a fair opportunity to address the Board while also ensuring compliance with the Open Meeting Law and other legal obligations, and to avoid disruption of its meetings, the Board adopts the following policy for comment periods at meetings:

1. When a public comment period exists on an agenda, citizens, taxpayers or employees of the Town of Pembroke may provide public comment. The Board acting through its Chair may set aside additional periods.
2. Public comment is confined to topics within the Board's responsibilities and/or identified on the Board's meeting notices. Comments expressing any viewpoint on these matters are welcome.
3. Speakers must begin their remarks by stating their name and affiliation. All comments shall be addressed through the Chair of the meeting.
4. Unless otherwise determined by the Chair, each comment period shall not exceed 15 minutes and each speaker shall not exceed three (3) minutes. Speakers who cannot complete their comments within three (3) minutes can provide further comments in writing. Large groups addressing the same topic are encouraged to consolidate their remarks or select a spokesperson to comment.
5. To ensure compliance with the Open Meeting Law, privacy laws, and other legal obligations those wishing to address the Board are advised to contact the Select Board office by the close of business on Fridays to submit their topic to be placed on the agenda. At its discretion, the Board may schedule issues raised by a speaker for deliberation at a future meeting.
6. All speakers are encouraged to present their remarks in a respectful manner. Comment periods are not a time for debate and speakers should not expect the Board to respond to comments that same evening.
7. Speakers who are also members of boards, committees or commissions should clearly identify whether comments made reflect positions of said board, committee or commission or whether the comments only reflect the view of the speaker.
8. Because of constitutional free speech principles, the Board does not have the ability to prevent all speech that may be upsetting and/or offensive however, speakers are reminded that the Open Meeting Law or other statutes, bylaws and policies, terms of a collective bargaining agreement or other contract, or privacy interests of Town officers and employees may compel the Board to curtail such comments so they may be addressed in an appropriate forum.
9. Anonymous comments may be placed on the agenda at the discretion of the Board.
10. Under most circumstances administrative channels are the proper and most efficient means for disposition of issues involving town personnel.
11. Disruptive comments and conduct will not be tolerated. Disruptive comments and conduct include, but are not limited to: the use of profanity; discriminatory or defamatory statements; vulgarity; comments or conduct that violate the law; and other comments or conduct that interfere with the Board's business during its current meeting. The Chair shall provide at least one verbal warning to a speaker if the speaker makes disruptive comments or engages in disruptive conduct. If, after at least one verbal warning, the speaker persists in making disruptive comments or engaging in disruptive manner, the Chair may end that person's privilege to address the Board. If the speaker fails to yield to the Chair's warnings or engages in egregious behavior, the Chair may have the speaker removed.