



Public Participation Policy
TOWN OF HAMPDEN, MAINE

Section 1. Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this policy is to establish reasonable rules of public participation in Town Council meetings and to promote the fair, orderly and efficient conduct of the Council's proceedings and affairs. The Town Council is committed to effective governance. To that end it is the town's desire that all meetings of the Council operate smoothly, and be conducted in a fashion which promotes order, collegiality, respect, and civility.

Section 2. Process

All Council meetings are open to the public. Public comment may be offered regarding topics not on the agenda or during the Public Comment portion of the meeting agenda. Town Council meetings are for the body to conduct the town's business. Public comment regarding items on the agenda may be offered during the portion of the meeting where that agenda item is. During Council discussion, a Council member may yield the floor to a member of the public for further comment.

It shall be the responsibility of the Chair to open meetings, lead and direct the proceedings, and ensure that decorum and order is maintained at all times in accordance with Town Council Rules of Procedure and the Town of Hampden Charter. To ensure and allow sufficient comment, discussion and debate among Council members and others in attendance, the Chair is responsible for recognizing those who wish to speak under Public Comments. Topics raised during the Public Comments period will generally not be discussed by the Council at that time but may be placed on a future agenda.

Section 3. Public Comment

1. Any person wishing to address the Town Council shall signify by raising their hand. After being recognized by the Chair and identifying themselves by stating their full name, and street address, he or she may share their comments. When, in the opinion of the Chair, their identity has not been adequately stated for those assembled, the Chair may request further information before permitting the person to speak.

2. Comments shall be limited to three minutes for each speaker during both the open session period and on any agenda item to which the Chair has invited public comment or

discussion, unless, in the discretion of the Chair, additional comment would be helpful to the Council.

3. Comments on agenda items must be relevant to the topic being considered.

4. The Chair has the authority to limit repetitive comments in the interest of efficient use of time.

5. All comments shall be directed to the Chair. All comments must be made in a civil and respectful manner. No public comment shall be allowed which has the effect of embarrassing or attacking the character of any individual or Council member.

6. All complaints may be referred to the proper authorities for investigation and tabled for further discussion at a future Council meeting. If any member of the public ignores these rules or is disruptive, the Chair or a majority of the Council may expel that member of the public from the meeting. If that member of the public refuses to leave the meeting, the Chair or a majority of those in attendance may ask the Public Safety Director or his assigns to remove that member of the public.

Section 4. Separability

This policy shall govern the Council's practices and procedures and is intended to be consistent with town ordinances, town policies and state and federal statutes. Each section of this policy shall be deemed independent of all other sections; if any provision of this policy is determined to be invalid, all other sections shall remain valid and enforceable.

Section 5. Amendments

This policy shall be reviewed and may be amended from time to time as the need arises.

Adopted: December 4th, 2023

Effective: December 5th, 2023