

**NEW SALEM  
SELECTBOARD POLICY  
PUBLIC COMMENT**

Adopted: June 26, 2023

**Purpose:**

To establish a policy to offer citizens the opportunity to provide public comments during Selectboard Meetings on matters within the scope of the Board's authority.

**Policy:**

The New Salem Selectboard welcomes information, concerns and opinions from residents attending board meetings that are within the Board's jurisdiction. The Board 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 orderly conduct of the Board's meetings. Civility is encouraged when addressing the Board during public comment.

**Procedures:**

This policy applies to all persons wishing to speak at a Board meeting. The Board will provide a ten (10) minute time period at the beginning of each meeting for public comments. Public comment shall not be included on the agenda of meetings that include open session only for voting to enter executive session or at board workshops. Comments are limited to topics within the Board's jurisdiction and not otherwise listed on the agenda. At the discretion of the Select Board Chair, comments may be limited to two minutes for each speaker, allowing a maximum of five speakers per meeting. Comments will be curtailed by the Chair once the time limit is exceeded.

The Selectboard will generally listen to comments rather than respond immediately, except under extenuating circumstances. Any comments related to repairs, maintenance, safety issues or general information will be referred to the appropriate department by the Town Coordinator and/or the Selectboard liaison to that department, as determined during the meeting.

Upon closing of the Public Comment period, further public comments shall not be heard, unless the Board provides for comments on specific topics on the Board's agenda.

The Board may also provide time for public comment on topics on the Board's agenda.

**Comments during such periods are limited to the specific topic under deliberation.** At the Select Board Chair's discretion, comments regarding agenda topics may also be limited to no more than two minutes per speaker. This decision will be made based on the number of speakers interested in providing comments on the topic. If an initial time limit is not imposed, but during discussion of the topic, the Select Board Chair determines that the discussion has become redundant (that is, speakers repeating the same information or opinion), the Select Board Chair may also choose to limit further comments to no more than two minutes per speaker, before calling for a vote or moving to the next agenda item.

All comments shall be addressed to or through the Chair of the Board. Speakers will state their first and last name and group or organization affiliation (if any) for the record.

Members of the public are encouraged to keep their comments respectful, despite differences of opinion on the matters discussed. The Chair reserves the right to terminate speech if there are threats of violence or comments inciting imminent lawlessness.

**Statutory Reference:**

**M.G.L. c. 30A, §20.**