

READFIELD SELECT BOARD MEETING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GUIDELINES



Welcome! Select Board meetings are conducted to carry on the official business of the Town of Readfield. All meetings of the Select Board, except Executive Sessions, are open to the public. The public is cordially invited to attend all Select Board meetings, and to participate in them consistent with the provisions of this policy, and with the exception of Select Board workshops which are primarily intended for the Select Board and staff to review and discuss items prior to their appearance at a regular Select Board meeting.

Citizen involvement in Town governance enhances the sense of community that makes Readfield a great place to live, work, and visit. Select Board meetings follow an agenda, which lists the issues the Board will address. The Board wants to hear from citizens and recognizes one way for residents to participate is to speak during various sections of each Select Board Meeting. The Select Board also recognizes that efficient, productive and orderly meetings are essential to ensure full and fair consideration of agenda subjects at each meeting. To balance these two interests, the Select Board adopts this Policy to govern public participation in their meetings.

2023-2024 Select Board Members

Select Board Chair Kathryn Mills Woodsum
Select Board Vice-Chair Sean Keegan
Steve DeAngelis
Carol Doorenbos
Dave Linton

The Select Board meets at least once each month on Monday evenings at 6:30pm in the Giles Hall second floor meeting room unless otherwise noted. Select Board workshops are held when needed and announced in advance on the calendar. During the months of July, August, September and December the Board has one regularly scheduled meeting, and during all other months, two regularly scheduled meetings typically two weeks apart. During budget season, February through May, the Select Board holds additional meetings to confer with the Budget Committee, to present a listening session on the proposed warrant articles, and to hold a Public Hearing on the final warrant articles.

Meetings and workshops are broadcast live on Readfield TV on Spectrum's local cable network on channel 7. In addition, we also broadcast live on the Town of Readfield's YouTube channel. Recordings of prior meetings are posted on the town website.

For more information about the Select Board, please contact the Readfield Town Office at 685-4939 or visit the Town's website at www.Readfieldmaine.gov

Please note: Individuals requiring special services in order to access the Select Board meetings, should contact the Town Manager, with a minimum of 72 hours' notice, with their request for service.

Please obtain a copy of the evening's agenda and note the order that items may be taken up by the Select Board. In some instances, the Select Board may elect to change the order of the agenda.

The Select Board Chair presides over the meeting. When the Select Board Chair is not present, the Select Board Vice-Chair shall serve that function.

For Unfinished and New Business agenda items, the order of Select Board and public action is (usually) as follows:

- 1) Select Board Chair reads the agenda item and possible action to be taken by the Select Board.
- 2) Generally speaking, a Select Board member will move to accept or oppose the item. If the action is seconded, the Select Board will undertake some initial discussion of the item. Please note that Select Board members will have already familiarized themselves with the item by reading through the packet and asking clarifying questions to the Town Manager prior to the meeting.
- 3) The Select Board Chair will then invite public comment following the initial Select Board comments. Members of the public who wish to address the Select Board Chair and Select Board must speak at the podium located in the center of the room. Identify yourself and where you live for the record as these proceedings are recorded and will be broadcast live over the local cable system. Members of the public will only be allowed to address the Select Board, through the Select Board Chair, if they are situated in front of the microphone at the podium. Please see the section below entitled 'Rules and Procedures Governing Public Comment Periods.'

If you have prepared written testimony, a copy should be given to the Select Board secretary who will be responsible for providing it to the members of the Select Board. If you wish for the elected officials to have a copy during the meeting, please provide the Select Board secretary with 7 copies no later than noon on the Monday before the scheduled Select Board meeting. It is strongly recommended that such testimony not be read in full; however, the main points can be summarized in your spoken comments.

Speakers listed on the agenda, including Town committee members, shall distribute all written materials pertinent to the agenda item and being discussed during comment time, to the Select Board secretary no later than noon on the Monday before the scheduled Select Board meeting.

The Select Board will not accept written materials distributed at a Select Board meeting, other than petitions submitted in accordance with state law.

- 4) Once the public portion has ceased, the Select Board will again discuss the issue and then proceed to a vote.

There are a number of parliamentary procedures that can be exercised by the Select Board which may involve actions to amend or table certain agenda items. Though this may be confusing at times, the Select Board Chair and the Select Board Secretary will try to advise the public as to what actions are being taken so that all votes are clear as to their intent or impact.

If a member of the public wishes to address the Select Board on a matter which is not expressly stated on the agenda, the matter may be taken up prior to the start of Unfinished and New Business during the Public Communication agenda item. The Select Board Chair always reserves the right to recognize any member of the public during this portion of the agenda and to limit comments or questions on any given matter.

If an Executive Session is conducted by the Select Board, state statute prohibits public attendance. Any action taken by the Select Board on any Executive Session matter must be acted upon in a public meeting and may occur at the end of the Executive Session (which has no time element relative to the length of the discussion involved with the session).

RULES AND PROCEDURES GOVERNING PUBLIC COMMENT PERIODS

The intent of this policy is to allow a fair and adequate opportunity for the public to be heard, to express opinions and concerns related to the business of the Town, and to provide adequate time for the Select Board to obtain information and opinions on subjects before it while ensuring that the time allowed for public input does not interfere with addressing the scheduled agenda.

To carry out these purposes, the following rules and procedures govern the public comment periods at all Readfield Select Board meetings:

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

A public comment period shall be conducted near the beginning of all regular Select Board meetings, at which time Readfield residents or taxpayers will have the opportunity to be heard on matters directly relating to Town business that is not included on the regular agenda. Individuals addressing the Select Board during the general public comment period will limit their comments to (3) three minutes. Up to fifteen (15) minutes will be allocated for general public comment. The full 15-minute time interval will not be reserved for potential discussion. If the general public comment exceeds 15 minutes, the public comment period will be suspended by the Select Board Chair to allow the Select Board to conduct its business and out of courtesy for those attending the meeting for a specific agenda item. The Select Board will not engage in dialogue with the public during this time but may provide factual information regarding the substance of a comment or to ask clarifying questions. Questions posed during the public comment period will be followed up on after the meeting. Individuals requesting further information should leave their contact information with the Town Manager.

A general public comment period will not be conducted at workshops, emergency meetings, or special meetings of the Select Board.

ADDRESSING SPECIFIC AGENDA ITEMS

In addition, public comments will be allowed during the meeting on those items requiring a public hearing and on other items appearing on the agenda. Comments should be directly related to the specific agenda item being addressed. Individuals addressing the Select Board regarding an agenda item shall limit their comments to three (3) minutes. All comments should be made within the allocated time for the agenda item. Public comments will not be taken during workshops unless a request is made in advance of the meeting to the Select Board Chair by an individual Select Board member.

RULES GOVERNING PUBLIC COMMENT PERIODS

1. Since meetings are broadcast and recorded, persons wishing to speak must use the public podium located in the front center of the audience, and speakers must preface their comments by giving their full name and address. Comments will be accepted from persons attending the meeting live on Zoom under the same conditions as those physically present at the meeting. No comments will be accepted anonymously or through another party, including through Select Board members.
2. Comments must be limited to issues or concerns directly related to Readfield municipal government. Public comment on matters not related to Town business will not be allowed, so as to make sure that all meetings are carried out in a productive and efficient time and in keeping with the interests of all who attend and participate in a Select Board meeting.
3. Questions about Town affairs and criticisms or concerns about Town policies, actions, or programs are welcome, provided they do not become personal. No personal attacks on any individual or firm, including Town employees, Town officials, or members of the public, will be tolerated during any meetings. Per state law, found in MRSA Title 1, Section 405, complaints or charges from the public about an individual employee will not be permitted. We encourage you to address such comments by directly contacting the Town Manager for their immediate follow-up and review. Complaints involving the Town Manager shall be directed to the Select Board Chair for consideration, but are not permitted to be publicly discussed pursuant to Maine Labor Laws.
4. Comments related to the following will be ruled out of order by the Select Board Chair:
 - a. Specific situations that are in litigation, including those in which the Town is a party (issues of a criminal or legal nature should be addressed with the Kennebec County Sheriff's Office or other criminal justice agency.) Individual employees and/or employee groups will not be permitted to discuss matters for which complaint or grievance procedures are provided;
 - b. Personal disputes between the speaker and other private residents not germane to Town business; or
 - c. Support for or opposition to any candidate for political office.
5. Individuals will be restricted to speaking once during the general public comment period and once per public comment period for each specific agenda item.
6. The public comment period is an opportunity for residents to express their views on matters

relating to Town business. Individuals addressing the Select Board shall direct their remarks exclusively to the Select Board Chair. No person other than the elected officials and the individual at the podium shall be permitted to enter into any discussion, either directly or through members of the Select Board, either in person or electronically.

7. As a limited designated public forum, the Select Board does not have the right to prohibit disparaging, rude and other remarks of a personal nature. But, because of the potential implications, including personal liability of the speakers, we encourage any speakers to strive to be accurate in their statements and avoid making personal, rude, or provocative remarks.
8. All statements should respect the dignity and seriousness of the proceeding.
9. Persons present at Select Board meetings shall not interrupt, nor applaud or otherwise express approval or disapproval of any statements made or actions taken at such meeting, except for those instances that are listed on the Select Board Agenda under Public Recognition where the Select Board Chair or a Select Board member is formally recognizing an individual or group for their accomplishments.

FAILURE TO FOLLOW GUIDELINES

The Select Board Chair will limit commentary that is determined not to be germane to Town business or the topic at hand, or which violates any of the guidelines listed above. The Select Board Chair will direct any individual not operating in accord with these guidelines to cease such action or risk being asked to be seated or removed. If such conduct continues, the Select Board Chair will call a recess, request the removal of such person(s) from the Chambers, adjourn the meeting, or take other such appropriate action. Repeated violations by any individual will result in the Select Board Chair revoking that individual's right to speak at future meetings. Should the Select Board Chair fail to take action, any Select Board member may move that the Select Board Chair enforce the rules and guidelines and, if denied, request that the Select Board vote on the motion.

ADDRESSING OTHER ITEMS

The public communications segments are not appropriate times to request an interpretation, hold a discussion and/or request a decision of the Select Board. A speaker requesting to present a more formal or comprehensive discussion may request in advance to be on the agenda for that evening. Such requests shall be made to the Town Manager by noon on Monday prior to the following scheduled Select Board Meeting. All reasonable requests will be considered, but it will be at the Select Board Chair's discretion whether to allow an agenda item depending on the nature of the request and the time available at a specific meeting. Direction could be given to the individual or group to an appropriate resource for further information. Any request to be on the agenda denied by the Select Board Chair, may be brought forth before the entire Select Board during Public Communications time for the entire Select Board to review. If a motion is made and passes to add the item to a future agenda, the Select Board Chair will add it to the agenda within the next two scheduled Select Board meetings.

Adopted as policy by the Select Board on 11/05/2012

Amended and adopted on 02/25/2013, and on 8/21/2023.