

Public Participation Guidelines for Boothbay Harbor Select Board Meetings

According to the Maine Municipal Officers Manual, the states "*Right to Know Law* requires that the general public be given full access to public proceedings," but "full public access does not mean an unconditional right of public participation. Public hearings and the town meeting are two occasions when the public is specifically allowed to participate."¹ For regular board meetings, municipal officers have broad discretion in allowing the public to speak.

The Maine Municipal Association *Municipal Officers Manual* defines members of the public² as:

- the general public (all person, the press);
- all municipal taxpayers (property owners);
- all municipal residents (year-round, seasonal, rental);
- all municipal voters; and
- the actual town meeting.

All people regardless of which group they belong to are entitled to observe the municipality carry out its business.

Public Participation: As each new or old business item on the agenda is brought to the floor for discussion, either the sponsor, board member, or Town Manager, as appropriate, shall first present initial comments for consideration by the board and the public. Following this introduction of the issue, there will be time devoted to any questions and preliminary discussion by board members. Once the agenda item has been discussed by board members, residents, taxpayers or authorized representatives may be invited to address the board regarding this particular agenda item. Public comments are generally solicited first from Boothbay Harbor voters, then Boothbay Harbor taxpayers (business owners and nonvoting residents). The board may also consider hearing from others attendees, time permitting. Comment from the public shall be limited to the expression of opinions or concerns regarding the agenda item only. The public comment period is not intended to provide a forum for debate between members of the public nor between the public and the board. No public comment shall be allowed which has the effect of embarrassing or attacking any individual or board member. After input from the public, the Chair will close public comment on the issue and then provide for additional discussion and vote on the issue by the board, if appropriate.

Agenda Items: Regular agenda items will be set by the board in consultation with the town manager 6 working days prior to the next board meetings. Requests for agenda items from the public may be submitted to the town manager, in writing, by noon 6 working days prior to the next regularly scheduled select board meeting, along with any and all necessary supporting material and information. The draft agenda will be submitted to the Register one week prior to the meeting. The Chair, in consultation with the board and town manager, will determine the final agenda. Alternatively, the public may suggest an agenda item during a select board meeting, however, any such suggestion may not be discussed at that meeting but will be addressed at the next regularly scheduled meeting. This does not preclude the board from considering any agenda item at any time following a majority vote of the board.

¹Municipal Officer Manual, Chapter 6, Public Meetings and Public Records, Page 95-96.

² Ibid, Page 90