

Exeter Community Library Public Comments Policy

Public Library Board meetings are always open to the public. The Exeter Community Library *encourages* public expression of opinion at its regular Board meetings, providing at least one period for public expression at each regular Board meeting.

During the public expression period, the Board President, responsible for the orderly conduct of the meeting (or the Presiding Officer should the President be absent), will solicit comments from audience members wishing to speak. The Board will listen and consider each speaker's comments. Items may then be referred to the Director, who will then report findings and may make recommendations to the Board.

Members of the public will:

- Be treated equally during this fair and orderly process.
- Be granted 3 minutes to speak during a 15-minute total period for public expression.
- Face and address the Board when speaking.
- Keep comments direct and to the point.
- Avoid speaking on matters involving personnel and privacy issues, including disclosing information about or complaining/leveling charges against particular individuals.*

Members of the public will be requested to state their name, municipality of residence, group, or organization affiliation (if any) and identify the agenda item on which they will comment.

*(While the Board acknowledges that a person may not be **required** to provide their name or other identifiers for them to attend, speak during, or otherwise communicate in relation to a regular Board meeting, the Board does request this information.)*

A member of the Board will recognize speakers prior to their speaking and rule on such matters as the following:

- Total time permitted for period of public expression
- Relevance of topic presented to the meeting agenda
- Repetitive and/or inappropriate/defamatory/abusive/offensive (as opposed to simply negative or critical), nature of remarks

The speaking privilege of those who violate the parameters for public comment may be terminated.

The Board will ensure public order on Library property is maintained as needed, with the support of security staff and law enforcement.

The Library Board meeting may be photographed or filmed by the Library or members of the public, and these recordings may be shared.

Visual displays brought to the meeting may not obstruct attendees' views, violate the fire code, or contain obscene language, including abbreviations denoting obscene language.

The process to sign in to speak at public comment:

1. In-person meeting
 - a. A sign-in sheet will be available a few minutes before the scheduled start time; a person may only sign in themselves. Speakers have to write their name and topic of discussion on the form.
2. Online meeting
 - a. Prior to the start of the meeting, anyone who wants to speak must send a message through the chat stating their name and topic of discussion.

*Charges, complaints, or challenges directed towards individual employees or trustees must be presented in writing to the Library Director and signed by the complainant.

Note: the processes for challenging an item in the Library's collection are outlined in the Collection Development Policy and are initiated via the complainant's completion of a Request for Reconsideration of a Library Resource form (policy and form at www.berkslibraries.org/branch/exeter)

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