600-02 — Public Participation in the Library Board of Trustees Meetings

Statement of Purpose

Members of the public are welcome to attend Fairport Public Library Board meetings. Library board meetings are for the conduct of library business.

The New York State Open Meetings Law (OML) was enacted to provide the public with access to the decision-making process of government officials while protecting the ability of government to fulfill its responsibilities. Accordingly, it is essential to the legislative and governmental process that the Board of Trustees' public business be performed in an open and public manner so that the public can attend meetings of the Library Board and listen to the deliberations and decisions that go into the making of public policy for the Library. The people's right to know the process of the Library Board's decision-making is essential.

However, the performance of the Library Board's business in an open and public manner is different from the issue of public participation in Library Board meetings. Such public participation is not required by law except in the case of a public hearing, where comments from the public regarding a particular issue are both encouraged and mandated by law. Every public body has an inherent right to regulate its own procedures. To allow members of the public the opportunity to provide input and comments on library-related issues, the Library Board of Trustees has established the following procedure.

Procedures for Public Comment Period

- A public comment period will be held at the beginning of every regularly scheduled monthly Library Board meeting and public hearing, but it may not be included as part of the agenda for special meetings or public presentations.
- The public comment period is limited to a total of 30 minutes—in the event that a large number of people have signed up to speak, the 30-minute public comment period may prevent some individuals from being heard. Members of the public acknowledged during this comment period by the presiding officer shall be afforded one opportunity per meeting, not to exceed 3 minutes, to address the board regardless of the number of topics or speakers. Members of the public may not yield their time to other speakers.
- Individuals wishing to address the Board must sign in with the Board Clerk and shall be recognized to speak in the order in which they registered. Signups must be completed prior to the meeting being called to order.
- Speakers must be recognized by the presiding officer—no member of the public shall be permitted to address the Library Board until and unless recognized by the presiding officer—after recognition by the presiding officer, speakers will be asked to state their name, address, and group/organization affiliation, if any.
- Speakers must address the board from the lectern provided unless the speaker has mobility issues, in which case those speakers may address the board from their seats.

- The subject matter to be addressed must be relevant to the Library Board and its interests—the Library Board has the sole and absolute discretion to determine whether a speaker's topic and/or comments are relevant to the Library Board or its interests, and if they determine that it is not, then the presiding officer shall rule the speaker out of order and terminate his/her remarks.
- The Library Board shall listen to the presentations and may interrupt to ask questions for clarification or information, but it should be noted this is a time for listening, not resolution—while speakers may ask questions of the Library Board, no speaker has the right to demand an answer to a specific question from the entire Library Board or any particular member of the Library Board; responses from the board will occur at a later date after the Library Board has had time to deliberate the issue, to seek more information, and/or to take recommendations from the director The Board reserves the right to comment after a statement has been completed or to immediately move on to the next speaker.
- No request for a show of hands or a "vote" of persons present at a regular meeting on any matter is allowed—it should be noted that this is a time for listening, not uncontrolled debate.
- All remarks shall be addressed to the Library Board as a body and not to any member thereof nor to other members of the public in attendance.
- It is important to note that a Library Board meeting is a meeting conducted in public, not a public meeting. In other words, the public, and possibly media representatives, are there to watch the board work.
- Speakers shall observe the commonly accepted rules of courtesy, decorum, dignity, and good taste—no person attending a Library Board meeting shall engage in disorderly or boisterous conduct, including without limitation, the utterance of loud, threatening, or abusive language, the display of signs, whistling, booing, handclapping, stamping of feet, or any other acts which disturb, disrupt, or otherwise prevent the business of government or which impede the orderly conduct of the meeting.
- Interested parties or their representatives may address the Board by written communications and a copy of such written statements shall be provided to the Library Board.
- The Library Board reserves the right to suspend the above rules as needed.

To address the Board

- sign in with your name and address with the Board Clerk prior to the meeting being called to order.
- come to the lectern when your name is called, if physically able.
- state your name and address clearly for the record.
- make your statement to the Board. You will have three minutes to speak. You will be notified when your time has elapsed.
- return to your seat when you are finished or when you are informed that your time is up.
- keep your comments civil and polite.

Adopted: January 12, 2012
Reviewed:
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