

# **PUBLIC HEARING RULES: Joint Public Hearing: Community & Economic Development Committee and Planning Board**

**11/01/2017 at 7:00 p.m.**

The following is adapted from the Volunteer Handbook

## **I. PUBLIC HEARINGS**

### *II. Purpose.*

The Town Council has referred legislation to the Community & Economic Development Committee and Planning Board for their recommendation. As such, they are required to hold a public hearing to take comment from the public.

When conducting a public hearing, the Chair or designated Hearings Officer is responsible for running the meeting. Generally, the purpose of a public hearing is for committee members to listen to comments from the public, and not to play a significant role in the meeting.

### *III. General Guidance*

#### *Points to remember:*

- A public hearing is designed for the committee members to listen to the public.
- Topics of discussion may elicit passionate, sometimes angry expressions and speakers.
- Generally, the committee members will not engage with speakers in any way. Rather, during the hearing members will simply listen to the public's input.
- If a procedural question is asked of the committee, the designated Hearings Officer may opt to answer it. During the public comment portion of the hearing, the chair will not answer questions concerning the merits of the application or proposal.
- The designated Hearings Officer can remind the public that the hearing is for residents to comment on the proposal. Any questions will be recorded, and if appropriate, will be answered later.
- Residents will be allowed to speak a second time only after all others have been given the chance to speak.
- The designated Hearings Officer may close the hearing once he/she is assured that all reasonably pertinent comments have been expressed.

### *IV. Conducting the Hearing*

- All those who wish to speak will be required to sign-in with name, address, organization (*if any*). This documents participation in the hearing, and provides an orderly process for speakers. It also provides the designated Hearings Officer with the ability to better control the meeting.
- A separate form will be available for those who wish to pose questions to the committee(s). All questions to the committees should be submitted in writing.

- When the public hearing opens, the designated Hearings Officer will read the public meeting notice into the record, define the purpose, objectives and rules of conduct.
- All in attendance should know the following:
  - a. The meeting is being recorded and all participants should speak into the microphone.
  - b. The designated Hearings Officer will clearly convey the process, expected conduct, and how the meeting is documents (e.g., committee secretary's notes, recording, etc.)
  - c. Time limit for each speaker is three (3) minutes. The designated Hearings Officer will be keeping time. Speakers will be given cues with 1 minute and 30 seconds remaining.
  - d. The written comment period is open until a Monday, November 6, 2017 at 4:00PM. Any submissions should include the name and address of the submitter. It should be sent to [TownManager@bridgewaterma.org](mailto:TownManager@bridgewaterma.org). The subject line should say "Marijuana Ordinance," or similar words. Also, all written submissions will be compiled and be available for viewing on the Town's website.

#### 9.IV.2 Public Comment

The designated Hearings Officer will invite public comment. Generally, speakers must use the microphone and announce their names and addresses. Unless an order of speakers is otherwise stipulated, speakers should be called in the following order:

- a. Elected officials in order of elective office (i.e. Federal, state, county, local).
- b. Town Officers.
- c. Others in the order they signed up.

#### 9.IV.3 Closing the Hearing

The designated Hearings Officer will close the hearing after all participants have been given a reasonable chance to speak. If the hearing needs to be continued, the committees will announce the time and date for the hearing to continue. A hearing should be continued if its objectives have not been accomplished.

#### 9.IV.4 Making the Decision

Once the hearing is closed, it is time for the committee to make a decision. The committee discussions will be conducted under the modified Robert's Rules of Order. The committee's may or may not render their decision on the same night of the hearing.