

Middleton Public Library

PUBLIC COMMENT POLICY

- I Introduction
- II Specific Guidelines for Public Comments
- III Guidelines for Public Comments at Special Library Board Meetings
- VI Guidelines for Public Comments in Writing

I. Introduction

The function of the regular meetings of the Middleton Public Library Board is to conduct the business of the Middleton Public Library. Although Library Board meetings are public meetings, they are not public hearings. The Board does, however, encourage public attendance at its meetings and provides an opportunity for public comment.

II. Specific Guidelines for Public Comments

- A. Time will be reserved at the beginning of each Library Board meeting for public comment. Public comment is limited to this period.
- B. Members of the public who wish to speak are asked to sign up before the meeting begins, identifying themselves and providing their address and group affiliation (if any) to the Board before speaking. Anyone refusing to identify him or herself will be prohibited from speaking.
- C. As a courtesy, it is appreciated if notice of an intention to speak at a Board meeting is given to the Library Director in advance of the meeting.
- D. Members of the public are limited to a maximum of five minutes of comments.
- E. A total of up to thirty minutes will be allotted per meeting for public comment.
- F. Public comments will be addressed to the entire Library Board, but normally there will not be a response from either Board members or the Library Director. It is at the Chairman's discretion to allow any response or discussion of public comments. Responses shall be limited to brief comments or facts in response to questions posed. Substantive discussion shall be avoided except insofar as a brief discussion is necessary to determine whether the issue should be placed on a future meeting agenda with public notice consistent with Wisconsin's Open Meetings Law."
- G. During the public comment session, comments are welcome but additional agenda items will not be accepted.
- H. Any member of the public wishing to have an item considered for addition to the agenda is asked to contact either the Library Director or the Chairman of the Library Board at least one week before the next Library Board meeting.
- I. If at any time persons appearing before the Board exceed the time limitation set forth in this policy or become inappropriate in language or behavior, it shall be the responsibility of the Chairman to declare that person out of order and to refuse him or her permission to continue to address the Board.

- J. Comments made become part of the meeting record.
- K. There is no guarantee that suggestions brought forth by the public during the public comment session will be addressed by the Board at the current or a future meeting.
- L. At the Chairman's discretion, additional public comments sessions or speaking time may be allowed.
- M. If the number of people wishing to speak is large, the Chairman may rule that a separate special Library Board meeting be scheduled on the issue in question and ask that those wishing to comment do so at that meeting.

III. Guidelines for Public Comments at Special Library Board Meetings

- A. A sign-in roster will determine the speaking order for people who wish to make public comment. The names will be called in the order in which they appear on the sign-up sheet.
- B. This is an open meeting, with speakers addressing members of the Board, others waiting to comment, and the public at large, as an audience.
- C. Each person is allowed to comment only once. Each speaker will have five minutes total to comment. The speaker may be asked to respond to questions from the Board.
- D. Meeting facilitators will inform the speaker and Library Board when one minute of discussion time remains. When five minutes are called, the person speaking may finish the current sentence.
- E. A spokesperson representing several other parties or organizations shall also have only five minutes to make public comment. The group being represented may stand in the audience to be recognized.
- F. If possible, each speaker will be asked to make public comment from a standing position in front of the Library Board and others present.

IV. Guidelines for Public Comments in Writing

Written comments will be accepted from anyone who does not have time to speak or anyone who wishes to supplement public remarks. Deadline for submitting written comments may be established. Comments may be submitted in either electronic or paper format. Send comments to: Library Board, c/o Library Director, Middleton Public Library, 7425 Hubbard Avenue, Middleton, WI 53562 or info@midlibrary.org.

Adopted: December 9, 2014