



## TOWN OF CASCO PUBLIC MEETING PARTICIPATION POLICY

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**Section 1. Purpose:** The purpose of this policy is to establish reasonable rules of public participation in Selectboard meetings and to promote the fair, orderly and efficient conduct of the Selectboard's proceedings and affairs. The Selectboard is committed to effective governance. To that end it is our desire that all meetings of the Selectboard operate smoothly, and be conducted in a fashion which promotes order, collegiality, respect, and civility. Therefore, we hereby adopt, and agree to adhere to, the rules and protocols for procedure which follow.

### **Section 2. Selectboard Process:**

All Selectboard meetings are open to the public. The Selectboard as a general rule will allow a high degree of public comment.

Public comment may be offered regarding topics not on the agenda during the general public comment portion of the Selectboard meeting. Public comments regarding items on the agenda must be offered during the portion of the meeting where that agenda item is addressed.

It shall be the responsibility of the Chair to open meetings, lead and direct the proceedings, and ensure that decorum and order is maintained at all times. To ensure and allow sufficient comment, discussion and debate among Selectboard members and others in attendance, the Chair is responsible for recognizing those who wish to speak and those who must wait to be recognized. To avoid repetition of a position already expressed by members of the public, the Chair may choose to move on to another item on the agenda, or call for action if appropriate, once all those wishing to speak have been provided with an opportunity to do so.

Topics raised during the general public comment period will generally not be discussed by the Selectboard at that time. Topics that need Selectboard discussion or action may be placed on a future Selectboard agenda.

As each item on the agenda for any Selectboard meeting is brought to the floor for discussion, the Selectboard sponsor of each item shall first present their initial comments for consideration by the public and other Selectboard members. Following this introduction of the issue, the Chair shall allow other Selectboard members to ask the sponsor questions that may help clarify the issue. No debate or discussion of collateral issues shall be permitted. Once the agenda item has been explained by its sponsor and clarified by questioning as provided above, the Chair shall open public comment.

Any member of the public may address the Selectboard regarding particular agenda items or during other periods provided for public comment, provided that the speaker follows the rules of public comment described in this policy.

After listening to public comments on an agenda item, the Chair will close public comment on that issue. The Selectboard may then discuss and take action on the issue. A vote by a majority of the Selectboard may close public comment at any time, but only after all members of the public have been provided at least one opportunity to provide feedback on the particular agenda item.

### **Section 3. Public Comment:**

- A. Any person wishing to address the Selectboard shall so signify by raising their hand. After being recognized by the Chair and identifying themselves by stating their full name, he or she may share their comments. When, in the opinion of the Chair, their identity has not been adequately stated for those assembled, the Chair may request further information before permitting the person to speak.
- B. Comments shall be limited to two minutes for each speaker during both the general comment period and on each agenda item, unless, in the discretion of the Chair, additional comments would be helpful to the Selectboard. In such a case, all speakers who have previously spoken on the subject must be provided with additional opportunity to speak, so that all speakers are afforded an equal opportunity to voice their opinions.
- C. Comments on agenda items must be relevant to the topic being considered.
- D. The Chair has the authority to limit irrelevant or repetitive comments in the interest of efficient use of time.
- E. All comments shall be directed to the Chair.
- F. All complaints may be referred to the proper authorities for investigation and tabled for further discussion at a future Selectboard meeting.
- G. A Selectboard member shall not be permitted to speak as a member of the public during any public comment period regarding an agenda item, unless the Selectboard member has recused himself or herself.

### **Section 4. Disruptive Behavior:**

Disruptive behavior means conduct that materially interferes with the Selectboard's ability to conduct its business. Examples include but are not limited to: interrupting others; speaking out of turn; shouting; refusing to yield the floor when time has expired; or displaying images, gestures, or content that a reasonable person would view as inherently disruptive to a public meeting. Conduct such as the use of profane or obscene language, personal insults, criticism of public officials, or the making of crude or obscene gestures is not, by itself, considered disruptive unless it actually interferes with the meeting's progress. Removal or other enforcement action may occur only when behavior substantially interrupts or delays the meeting, consistent with judicial standards requiring actual disruption before limiting speech.

### **Section 5. Enforcement.**

The Chair will administer this policy using a progressive approach:

1. **Reminder** – A polite reminder of the applicable rule.

2. **Warning** – A clear warning that continued noncompliance will result in removal.
3. **Action** – Removal from the meeting room or remote platform if disruptive conduct continues.
4. **Escalation** – If necessary, the Chair may call a recess or request law enforcement assistance.

These steps may be accelerated if conduct presents a safety concern or materially disrupts the meeting. Enforcement is based solely on behavior and its effect on the conduction of the meeting, not the viewpoint expressed, and will be applied uniformly in accordance with First Amendment standards requiring viewpoint-neutral regulation of speech in limited public forums.

All enforcement actions will be documented in the meeting minutes.

**Section 6. Separability:**

This policy shall govern the Selectboard’s practices and procedures and is intended to be consistent with town ordinances, town policies and state and federal statutes. Each section of this policy shall be deemed independent of all other sections; if any provision of this policy is determined to be invalid or unenforceable by a court of competent jurisdiction, all other sections shall remain valid and enforceable.

**Section 7. Amendments:**

This policy may be reviewed and amended from time to time as the need arises by a majority vote of the Selectboard. All proposed amendments must be placed on an agenda of a regular Selectboard meeting, with Selectboard discussion and an opportunity for public comment provided before any action is taken.

Adopted this \_\_\_th day of May 2026.

**Approved by Casco Selectboard:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Grant Plummer, Chair

\_\_\_\_\_ Robert MacDonald, Vice-Chair

\_\_\_\_\_ Mary-Vienessa Fernandes

\_\_\_\_\_ Scott Avery

\_\_\_\_\_ Eugene Connolly