

# Claverack Free Library

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## Public Comment At Public Meetings Policy

**Approved: April 2018**

The Claverack Free Library Board of Trustees recognizes the value of public comment on Library issues and the importance of allowing members of the public to express themselves on matters of community interest.

To permit the fair and orderly expression of public comment, the Board provides periods for public comment at public meetings. All comments must be civil in nature.

On a written appearance form to be provided, those persons wishing to comment should register their intention to comment upon arrival at the meeting. Such persons will be asked to provide their name, address, and group affiliation.

At the start of the 'Public Comment' period the President or meeting chairperson, henceforth referred to as the presiding officer, will advise the public:

- 1) Those persons wishing to comment must be recognized by the presiding officer.
- 2) All comments shall be directed to the presiding officer.
- 3) All comments need to remain focused on library issues.
- 4) The overall time allowed for "Public Comments" is 15 minutes unless the presiding officer feels more time is needed due to the number of people wishing to speak or the complexity of the subject being discussed. If the presiding officer finds there are more numerous requests to make public comment than time will permit, the presiding officer shall make an effort to ensure an equal amount of time for comments in favor and against the subject matter of the comments. The presiding officer shall not be required to allow every person who wishes to address the presiding officer to do so, so long as the presiding officer finds that representative comments have been presented for each side of an issue subject to debate. Any person who is not allowed to make remarks during public comment shall be permitted to submit written comment to the Board Secretary either before or after the time for public comment.
- 5) In the interest of allowing others time to speak, comments shall be limited to 3 minutes per speaker.
- 6) If a clarification or correction of factual errors is in order, the presiding officer may engage in the discussion or may direct the question, comment or opinion to the appropriate person to respond.

Each person will be allowed to speak only once, or otherwise at the discretion of the presiding officer.

Groups may register a representative spokesperson by completing an appearance form. The appearance form must designate (i) the number of people the designee represents for the purpose of making public comment and their identities; (ii) the subject matter of the public comment; and (iii) whether the subject matter is germane to an item on that meeting's agenda. Any person identified as being represented by a group spokesperson shall be deemed to have waived their opportunity to speak independently unless the

presiding officer determines that allowing such a speaker to address the Board will contribute new testimony or evidence germane to an issue on the agenda for that meeting.

1. A representative spokesperson who timely files a complete appearance form to speak on a matter germane to the agenda shall be permitted to speak for three (3) minutes for each person being represented, up to a maximum of fifteen (15) minutes.
2. A representative spokesperson who timely files a complete appearance form to speak on a matter not germane to the agenda shall be permitted to speak for three (3) minutes for each person being represented, up to a maximum of nine (9) minutes

The presiding officer may:

- Interrupt or terminate a participant's comment opportunity when the comments exceed the 3-minute limitation;
- Terminate a participant's comment opportunity if comments are personal attacks, abusive, or obscene;
- Request any individual to leave the meeting when that person does not observe reasonable decorum;
- Request the assistance of law enforcement officers in the removal of a disorderly person when that person's conduct interferes with the orderly progress of the meeting;
- Call for a recess or an adjournment to another time when the lack of public decorum interferes with the orderly conduct of the meeting.