

Jaffrey Public Library Board of Trustees Public Comment Policy

The Jaffrey Public Library Board of Trustees (the Board) welcomes public input on library-related issues from Jaffrey Public Library cardholders and cardholders of the Monadnock Regional Library Consortium, of which the library is a founding member.

Most library-related questions can be answered by the Library Director or referred to the Trustee Board Chair, outside of the full Board meeting.

Meetings of the Board shall be open to the press and public in accordance with RSA 91-A, the NH right-to-know law.

The purpose of Board meetings is for the Board to discuss and act upon matters within its authority. Although public access and observation of meetings is guaranteed under RSA 91-A, the public right to speak or comment is not. The Board provides this opportunity, within the guidelines below, to foster public participation.

Opportunity for Public Comment

- The Board will provide an opportunity for members of the public to comment on library matters at all regular Board meetings.
- Public comment periods may not be included on the agenda for emergency meetings or for meetings whose sole purpose is to address issues in non-public session.
- Public comment will generally be scheduled at the start of the meeting, before other agenda items.
- A maximum of 30 minutes of public comment will be permitted at the beginning of each meeting.
- This period may be extended at the Chair's discretion or by a majority vote of the Board.
- The 30-minute period is for general public comment relating to matters on the agenda for the current meeting only.
- If no members of the public have signed in to speak by the time the meeting is called to order, the regular portion of the Board meeting will begin. Public comment may be reopened at the discretion of the Chair or designee.

Speaker Procedures and Conduct

- **Sign-In Requirement:** Persons wishing to speak shall sign in on a roster provided, including their name and address, prior to the commencement of the meeting.
- **Speaker Priority:** Priority will be given to Jaffrey residents, followed by non-resident cardholders, with all others recognized at the discretion of the Chair.
- **Recognition by Chair:** Members of the public shall not speak unless recognized by the Board Chair or other person presiding over the meeting.

Approved by the Jaffrey Public Library Board of Trustees, Jaffrey, NH, July 15, 2025

- **Identification:** Prior to speaking, each person shall state their full name and their town/city of residence for the record. Speakers should address their remarks to the Board.
- **Time Limit:** Individual speakers will be allotted a **maximum of three minutes per person**. Each speaker will be permitted equal time and may speak only one time per meeting. Speakers may not relinquish allotted time to another speaker. The Board may, at the outset of the public comment period, increase or decrease the individual time limit for all speakers, maintaining at least 30 minutes in total. The Trustee Secretary or another Trustee will serve as the time keeper.
- **Content of Comments:** During the public comment period, an individual may offer comments on **current agenda items only**.
- **Not a Question-and-Answer Session:** Public comment is a time for members of the public to provide input to the Board; it is not a question-and-answer session. Board members are without authority to answer spontaneously on behalf of the Board. Any Board response will generally be deferred pending consideration by the full Board.
- **Decorum:** Speakers shall observe the commonly accepted rules of courtesy and decorum and not disturb, disrupt, or otherwise prevent the orderly conduct of the meeting.
- **Prohibited Speech:** Defamatory statements, comments threatening bodily harm, or other unprotected speech will not be tolerated. Comments that do not adhere to these provisions may be ruled out of order by the Chair.
- **Submission of Comments:** Speakers may provide a copy of their comments for inclusion in the meeting minutes.
- **Written Comments:** The Board will accept written comments from persons unable to attend a meeting.
 - Written comments must be submitted at least three days prior to a Board meeting.
 - They shall include the name and town/city of residence of the commenter and shall be limited to 150 words.
 - Anonymous written comments will not be accepted.
 - Only one written comment is permitted per individual for each meeting.
 - Written comments that meet the policy requirements will either be (a) included in materials publicly available at the meeting, (b) briefly described in the minutes, or (c) attached to the minutes.
 - In the event the full 30 minutes for public comment have not been exhausted, the Board may read written comments aloud at the meeting on a first-received basis until the comment period has expired.

Meeting Disruptions

- While members of the public have the right to attend and offer input, they do not have the right to disrupt the meetings. Impermissible disruptions include, but are not limited to: shouting at

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any time; speaking while someone else has been recognized by the Chair; obstructing the view of others with posters; refusing to terminate public comment after a speaker's time has expired; any sustained or intentionally loud noises after the Chair has called for order; or any other conduct intended to disrupt the meeting or person speaking.

- If, after at least two warnings from the Chair, an individual continues to disrupt the meeting by words or actions, the Chair may direct the person to leave the meeting. Upon refusal, the Chair may request assistance from law enforcement officials to have the individual removed, with the potential for criminal charges.
- Interruptions may result in a recess or, provided the thirty minutes for public comment has expired, adjournment of the meeting.
- The Chair may alternatively move to terminate the public comment period prior to the exhaustion of thirty minutes if the meeting is disrupted, provided a majority vote of the Board confirms the termination of the public comment period.