

POLICY STATEMENT
SOUTH HADLEY ELECTRIC LIGHT DEPARTMENT (SHELD)

Title: Public Comment Policy

Adoption Date: July 27, 2023

Purpose: To offer citizens the opportunity to provide public comments during SHELD Light Board Meetings on matters within the scope of the Board's authority.

I. Introduction

The SHELD Light Board encourages all residents to attend its meetings and welcomes their views on matters within the Board's authority whether expressed in person, by phone, or by written communication. Civility is encouraged when addressing the Board during Public Comment.

All regular and special meetings of the SHELD Light Board shall be open to the public and shall conform to the Open Meeting Law of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (M.G.L Ch. 30A, §20). The public shall be precluded from attending an executive session meeting of the Light Board for reasons pursuant to M.G.L Ch. 30A §21.

II. Authority of the Chair

The Chair of the SHELD Light Board is the designated individual who presides over the meetings. Pursuant to M.G.L Ch. 30A §20(g), no person shall address a meeting of a public body without permission of the Chair, and all persons shall, at the request of the Chair, be silent.

If a person:

- Speaks out of order, or
- Engages in other disorderly conduct during a meeting, or
- Attempts to address a matter that is not within the public body's scope of authority and responsibility;

The Chair shall have the right to rule said person out of order.

III. Procedure for General Public Comments

- A. Public comment will occur at each business meeting held in open session, except as otherwise determined by the Chair. Public comment shall not be included in meetings that include open session only for voting to enter executive session or at board workshops. Public comment will follow the minute's approval unless otherwise indicated on the posted agenda.
- B. It is suggested that those wishing to speak at a regularly scheduled meeting, notify the Chair of the Light Board by email, through the SHELD website link (Community, Municipal Light Board), by the end of the business day on the Tuesday prior to its next regularly scheduled meeting. The request must include first and last name, address, the organization being represented (if any), and the topic to be discussed.
- C. If a speaker wants to comment on a specific agenda item, they should wait until that item is under consideration by the Board before requesting to speak.
- D. The Chair will determine the order of the speakers. Comments will be limited to 3 minutes per person. The public comment period should not exceed 15 minutes to allow the Board to complete its required business in a timely manner. The Chair may curtail verbal comments once they exceed the time limit.
- E. Speakers will begin their remarks by stating their first and last name, address, for the record. All remarks will be addressed through the Chair of the meeting.
- F. Speakers who require reasonable accommodations for a speech-related disability or who require language interpretation services may be allotted a total of five (5) minutes to present their material. Speakers are encouraged to notify the Chair of the Light Board by email, at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting if they wish to request an extension of time for one of these reasons.
- G. The Chair reserves the right to terminate speech which is not Constitutionally protected because it constitutes true threats or incitement to imminent lawless conduct.

H. Written comments may be presented to the SHELD Light Board before or after the meeting for review and consideration by members of the Board at an appropriate time. Written comments shall include the individual's first and last name and address.

IV. Response to Public Comments

- A. Upon closing of the Public Comment period, further public comments not related to a matter on the agenda, shall not be heard.
- B. The Light Board will take all comments and questions under advisement and respond at a later date, unless the Chair deems it appropriate to respond at that time.
- C. Public comments related to repairs, maintenance, safety issues or general information will be referred to the appropriate department through the General Manager.