

Protocol for Public Participation

Needham Human Rights Committee Meetings

In accordance with state law and Needham Town Committee requirements, all meetings of the Needham Human Rights Committee shall be open to the public, except for Executive Sessions.

1. At the beginning of a meeting as specified on the agenda, the public is invited to present an overview of the complaint they are bringing to the Committee. Statements may be made orally or in writing. The Chair will provide any member of the public making a complaint a copy of this Protocol for Public Participation at the beginning of the meeting.
2. If possible, the individual should inform the Chair of the committee in advance of the meeting, either by email to needham.hrc@gmail.com or in person before the meeting begins.
3. The individual addressing the Committee should try to explain the complaint clearly and frame a question for the Committee to consider.
4. The individual speaker shall have up to **5 minutes** to speak.
5. The Committee asks clarifying questions – questions that have brief, factual answers.
6. If there is a response to the complaint that can be readily provided at the meeting, the Chair may choose to provide it at that time. For all other responses, the Committee will take the matter under advisement and take timely action where appropriate.
7. The Chair will promptly report the Committee's response and/or action to the individual making the initial complaint, including notice that the issue raised will appear on future Committee agendas.

8. The Chair reserves the right to limit the number and length of complaints addressed, depending on the number of individuals who wish to speak and the degree to which statements reiterate similar viewpoints.
9. The Chair may terminate any individual's privilege of address for comments deemed to be offensive, disruptive or out of order.

The goal of this protocol isn't to solve or decide anything, but to obtain a clear understanding of the issue. After this protocol is conducted, the Committee ideally discusses its involvement or next steps to take. If time does not permit, discussion should resume at the following meeting. **The committee reserves the right at any time to call a closed Executive Session in order to conduct this discussion if deemed necessary by the committee chair.**

Updated 9/19/16