

**TOWN OF NARRAGANSETT  
COUNCIL COMMUNICATION**

CC: 29  
Amend No.           

Date Prepared: October 2, 2019  
Council Meeting Date: October 7, 2019

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**TO:** Honorable Town Council  
**FROM:** Jill A. Lawler, Council President Pro Tem  
**SUBJECT:** Ordinance related to decorum at Town Meetings

**RECOMMENDATION:**

That the Town Council direct the Town Solicitor to draft for a first reading, an ordinance regarding behavior guidelines at Town Meetings.

**SUMMARY:**

Other towns, such as Exeter, have recently implemented a decorum ordinance. This motion will ensure that everyone's first amendment rights are protected while keeping Town Meetings civil.

The ordinance should address civility, decorum and order while attending Town Meetings. It should also address making personal attacks, slanderous remarks or becoming boisterous while addressing the Council and include guidelines for removal from the Council Chambers based on behavior. Further, any item that could be used as a weapon such as sticks should be banned.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Town of Exeter Ordinance on Decorum at Town Meetings

**TOWN OF EXETER**  
**AN ORDINANCE RELATING TO DECORUM AT TOWN**  
**ASSEMBLIES AND MEETINGS**

It is hereby ordained by the Town of Exeter as follows:

**SECTION 1.**

**Article I** of Chapter 2 of the Exeter Code of Ordinances entitled "Administration - In General" is hereby amended by adding thereto the following Sections:

**Section 2.1 – Decorum at Town Assemblies and Meetings.**

- a) **Prohibited Activities:** While any Town Assembly, the Town Council, or any duly constituted Board, or Commission of the Town of Exeter, is in session, attendees must observe and maintain civility, order and decorum and no person, member or attendee shall by statement, action, conversation, or otherwise, delay or interrupt the proceedings or the peace of the Town Assembly, Town Council, Town Board, or Town Commission, or disturb any member thereof while speaking, or by refusing to obey the orders of the Town Assembly, Council, Board, or Commission or its presiding officer.
- b) **Cessation of Address:** Any person making personal, impertinent, or slanderous remarks or who shall become boisterous while addressing the Town Assembly, Council, Board, or Commission, or any member thereof, shall be forthwith, by the presiding officer, barred from further audience before the Town Assembly, Council, Board, or Commission at that meeting, unless permission to continue is granted by a majority vote of the Town Assembly, Council, Board, or Commission.

**Cross-References:** Code Article III Section 2-204, Town Council Bylaws (10/6/97 as amended) Sections 108, 119 and 120.

**State Law References:** R.I.G.L. 45-3-19, 45-16-9, 11-32-1, 11-45-1

**Section 2.2 – Enforcement of Decorum.**

- a) **Sergeant-at-Arms:** The Town Sergeant shall be the Sergeant-at-Arms at any Town Assembly or meeting, including Town Council, Board, or Commission meetings. Special constables who have been duly elected by the Town Council may, at the request of the Chair, or presiding officer, also be designated to attend and act as Sergeant-at-Arms. The Sergeant-at-Arms shall carry out all orders and instructions given by the Chair or presiding officer for the purpose of maintaining order and decorum at any such Town Assembly, Council, Board, or Commission meeting.

- b) **Removal Procedure:** If any person conducts himself or herself in a disorderly manner in any assembly or meeting referenced above, the Chair, moderator or presiding officer may order that person to withdraw and remove him or herself from the assembly or meeting; and, on the person's refusal, may order the Town Sergeant, Sergeant-at-Arms, or any Town Constable present to take him or her from the meeting until the meeting is adjourned in accordance with State law or local ordinance.
- c) **Duties/Removal/Complaint:** Upon instruction of the Chair or presiding officer, it shall be the duty of the Sergeants-at-Arms to peaceably remove any person who violates the order and decorum of the meeting and, if applicable, may cause him or her to be prosecuted for the violation of any applicable provisions of the Exeter Code of Ordinances or of State law. Any such complaint may be signed by the Chair, presiding officer, the Town Sergeant or any special Constable in attendance.

**Cross-References:** Code Article III Chapter 2, Sections 2-201, 2-202, 2-203, 2-204, 1-15, 1-16  
Town Council Bylaws (10/6/97 as amended) Sections 108, 119 and 120.  
**State Law References:** R.I.G.L. 45-3-19, 45-16-9, 11-45-1, 11-32-1.

## **SECTION 2.**

This ordinance shall take effect upon passage.

Presented by CALVIN A. ELLIS, 2019

Introduced by CALVIN A. ELLIS, 2019

Approved on SEPTEMBER 3, 2019