

From: [David @ Eyes Of Steel](#)
To: [BOR AllReps](#)
Cc: [Shaw, Ramya](#); [Morson, Eric](#); [McKeown, Michael](#); [Camporeale, Karen](#)
Subject: DEFENSE OF PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD vs LIMITING IT (on LR32.005)
Date: Saturday, January 17, 2026 12:30:31 PM

Dear Honorable President Shaw, Majority Leader Morson, Chair McKeown, Vice Chair Camporeale, members of the Legislative and Rules Committee, and members of the Board of Representatives,

I am writing to express serious concern regarding the proposed changes to the Board's public comment rules and to urge you to reject any measures that further restrict public participation in legislative meetings.

Public comment is not an administrative inconvenience. It is a core function of representative government and one of the few direct mechanisms through which residents can engage with their elected officials in real time. Rules governing public comment should therefore be interpreted and applied to expand access and understanding, not to narrow them.

Recent Board practice demonstrates why this issue is so pressing. At the January Board meeting, items concerning the mayor's vetoes of the pet shop ordinance and the tree ordinance were newly before the Board for discussion and potential action. Members of the public who sought to address the vetoes were prevented from doing so on the grounds that the underlying ordinances had already gone through public hearings in prior years.

An ordinance and a mayoral veto of that ordinance are not the same legislative action. A veto is a new executive act that raises new policy considerations and requires independent legislative judgment. Preventing public comment on a veto because the ordinance itself was previously heard collapses two distinct stages of governance into one and deprives both legislators and the public of meaningful dialogue. This approach was neither fair to the public nor consistent with the spirit of open legislative deliberation.

Public comment on a veto cannot be separated from discussion of the ordinance being vetoed. The rationale for overriding or sustaining a veto necessarily rests on the substance, intent, and public benefit of the underlying legislation. Blocking that discussion renders public comment hollow and prevents newly seated legislators from hearing constituent perspectives on matters they had never previously voted on. When viewed alongside the recent misapplication of FOIA guidance relayed to members regarding attendance at an informational meeting on pet shops and the puppy mill pipeline, the cumulative effect creates deeply troubling optics for a legislative body committed to transparency.

It is also important to note a departure from long standing Board practice. Under the previous two Boards, it was customary for the presiding officer to ask at the conclusion of public comment whether anyone else wished to speak. This practice acknowledged that some residents learn they may speak only by listening to the meeting, some arrive late due to work or caregiving obligations, and some need reassurance before participating. At the January meeting, public comment moved directly from the last listed speaker to the next agenda item, with no articulated close of the public comment period and no opportunity for others to come forward. That shift, whether intentional or not, further narrowed public participation.

The existing rules already prohibit public comment on topics that have gone through a formal public hearing. Even that limitation should be interpreted narrowly and cautiously. When applied expansively, it creates a permanent speech blackout regardless of changed circumstances, new facts, new officials, or new executive actions.

Proposals that add preregistration deadlines, additional procedural hurdles, or expanded discretionary control risk codifying this restrictive interpretation into formal policy. Such measures would transform public comment from an open forum into a managed permission system and would disproportionately exclude working residents, renters, immigrants, and those without the ability to monitor agendas during business hours.

If residents are permitted to submit written communications to the Board on any subject at any time, there is no principled justification for barring oral public comment on the same subject when it comes before the Board for action. Oral public comment serves a distinct and vital function. It surfaces urgency, lived experience, whistleblowing, and community priorities in ways written correspondence often cannot.

A legislative body should manage time fairly, but it should not manage speech content, participation history, or civic access. Public comment exists to facilitate ongoing democratic dialogue, not to be treated as a one time checkbox that expires after a prior hearing.

I respectfully urge you to reject further restrictions on public comment and to reaffirm that this Board exists first and foremost to hear from, deliberate with, and represent the public.

Respectfully,

David Michel

Rockledge Drive, Stamford

Former Connecticut State Representative, 146th District, 2019 to 2025

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