

TOWN OF DEDHAM  
Select Board  
Public Property Naming Policy

**Introduction**

The Select Board believes that naming Town-owned property is an honor for the individual or group recognized and a decision of significance to the Town. Names given to Town assets can last for generations, during which community values and beliefs may change. As such, the Board believes that recognition must be extended cautiously and only after public input. Personal prejudice or favoritism, political pressure, or temporary popularity should not influence choosing a name.

**Scope**

For the purposes of this Policy, "property" shall mean any real and tangible property of the Town, including buildings, parks, squares, ways, and parts thereof. While this Policy applies only to the Select Board, requests for approval of monetary or tangible gifts in connection with a property naming from other Town departments charged with the care, custody, and control of public buildings shall be evaluated under the terms of this Policy. A decision to name a property in connection with a monetary or tangible gift shall not in any way constitute an ongoing contract with the Town. The Town may, in its sole discretion, and subject only to its own policies, rename any property at any time and amend or rescind this policy at its sole discretion.

**Criteria**

Property may be named after an individual, organization, or group (the "nominee") when the nominee has a strong historical association with the specific property, the area in which it is located, and/or the Town as a whole. Historically, Town buildings have not been named after individuals, and adoption of this policy is not intended to signal any change to that practice; whether and how to name a building remains solely within the discretion of the Select Board. In deciding the appropriateness of any proposal, the Board shall consider the following:

1. The historical significance and impact of the nominee, including the quality and length of the nominee's contributions to Dedham;
2. The value of the property or part thereof to be named;
3. The public interest to be served;
4. Any historical events, people, or places associated with the property;
5. Any outstanding individual associated with the property;
6. Any gift associated with the property;
7. Any costs associated with the naming;
8. Whether members of the public have engaged in the naming process;
9. Whether members of the public support or oppose the naming; and
10. Whether the naming would avoid duplication, confusing similarity, or inappropriateness.

Unless sooner authorized by the Select Board, Naming Petitions shall not be submitted or acted upon until one year has elapsed following an individual nominee's death.

**Process**

Any board, committee, or resident may propose in writing that a property be named. The applicant shall use a "Public Property Naming Petition" to describe the proposal and identify a contact person (The "Advocate"). Such petition will be filed with the Town Clerk and be signed by at least two hundred (200) Dedham registered voters, as certified by the Town Clerk. The Town Clerk will then forward a copy of said petition to the Town Manager, with a certificate showing how many registered voters have signed. Additionally, if the property to be named is on school or library grounds and includes a monetary or tangible gift, the Select Board shall not take action on such petition until the School Committee or Board of Library Trustees, respectively approve the same.

Upon receipt of a Naming Petition, the Board may choose to consider the request at a public meeting. Following this initial meeting, the Board Chair shall specify a consideration period of no less than thirty (30) days to allow for public comment. Before voting on a name, the Board may solicit advice from appropriate sources such as the Dedham Historical Society, surrounding property owners, affected parties, other Town officials, and anyone else the Board believes can contribute meaningful input. Following the comment period, the Board may, at its sole discretion, vote on the petition.

**Recognition Plaques**

When the Select Board approves naming a property, the Board welcomes the donation of a small plaque to be placed in the vicinity of the named property at a location determined by the Board. However, the design and text of all such plaques shall be approved by the Board and are subject to revision by the Board at any time. Generally, the Board will only approve plaques that list the name of the property and contain the words:

- "In honor of [nominee]"
- "In recognition of [nominee]"
- "In memory of [nominee]"

When appropriate, the Board may, in its sole discretion, approve select additional text providing context on the nominee. For example, the Board may choose to approve a plaque that reads:

Jane Smith Meeting Room  
In Honor of Jane Smith and her 25 Years of Service on the Select Board

Selection of additional text shall generally be limited to recognizing the nominee's role in Town, such as distinguished service in the military, law enforcement, public office or employment, or other community capacities.

**Costs**



All costs associated with the approved naming petition and plaque shall be the Advocate's responsibility, including, but not limited to, signage, installation, and upkeep. Nothing herein shall prohibit the Board from identifying other specific funding or seeking approval for payment of costs of upkeep of such plaques through other methods.

**Renaming**

The Board recognizes that property may need to be renamed from time to time. Prior to acting on any renaming, the Board will attempt to contact, in writing, the Advocate listed on the original Public Property Naming Petition to advise them that renaming is under consideration.

Adopted by the Select Board at its meeting of January 19, 2023.



---

James A. MacDonald, Chair




---

Kevin R. Coughlin, Vice Chair



---

Dennis J. Teehan, Jr.



---

Dimitria Sullivan



---

Erin Boles Welsh