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### **STATEMENT OF THE CHATHAM BOARD OF SELECTMEN**

The Chatham Board of Selectmen is issuing this statement in order to clarify the Policy of the Town with respect to the conduct of meetings of appointed boards, committees and commissions under the Open Meeting Law and its Guidelines as issued by the Massachusetts Attorney General.

The Selectmen believe that the history of Chatham and its continued inclusion of open town meeting in its form of government reflect the desirability and importance of public participation. At the same time, there is a need for order at public meetings which is within the authority of the chairperson.

Therefore, in the interest of fairness and transparency, it is the Policy of the Town that public meetings of appointed boards, committees and commissions be conducted under the Open Meeting Law so as to encourage public participation wherever time permits (any individual "workshop" or "working session" should set aside sufficient time for public comment either at the end of the session or periodically during the session); that the chair be fair in hearing a range of viewpoints and in making rulings so as not to grant special consideration to any person beyond that available to every person; and that the discretion which is available to the chair under the Law be exercised reasonably and with due regard for inclusiveness, transparency and efficiency, while discouraging personal criticism and unnecessary repetitiveness, and while insuring that public comment is reasonably germane to the agenda item under consideration.

The Chair should provide advance notice, in the meeting notice, in the agenda, or at the beginning of the meeting, as to when and how public comment will be entertained.

The public is reminded of the following statement from the Attorney General's Guidelines:

Under the Open Meeting Law, the public is permitted to attend meetings of public bodies but is excluded from an executive session that is called for a valid purpose listed in the law. While the public is permitted to attend an open meeting, an individual may not address the public body without the permission of the chair. An individual may not disrupt a meeting of a public body, and at the request of the chair, all members of the public shall be silent. If, after clear warning, a person continues to be disruptive, the chair may order the person to leave the meeting. If the person does not leave, the chair may authorize a constable or other officer to remove the person. Although public participation is entirely within the chair's discretion, the Attorney General encourages public bodies to allow as much public participation as time permits.