

TOWN OF WAKEFIELD
PUBLIC ASSET NAMING POLICY

INTRODUCTION

The Town Council shall be responsible for the naming of public assets under its dominion and control. In light of the provisions of G.L. c. 78 and 164, the Council recognizes that its jurisdiction excludes assets of the Lucius Beebe Memorial Library and the Wakefield Municipal Gas and Light Department. In consideration of the provisions of G.L. c. 71 and Charter § 8-4, the Council will consult with the Wakefield Public Schools concerning school assets. For this purpose, public assets shall mean buildings, parks, squares, parcels of land, or portions of any of the foregoing, which are owned by the Town (as modified in the preceding sentence). It is the goal of the Council to reserve the naming or renaming of public assets for circumstances that will best serve the interests of the Town and to ensure a worthy and enduring legacy for the Town's public assets. It is the policy of the Council that the naming or renaming of public assets shall be done sparingly and only for good cause shown. The Council intends to be cautious in its implementation of this Policy in order to avoid over-naming public assets.

PURPOSE

The Town Council believes that the naming of public assets is a matter of substantial or significant public interest and deserves careful consideration. The Council, therefore, creates this policy to establish a systematic, consistent and transparent approach for naming of public assets in the Town. This policy shall not apply to the naming or renaming of ways in the Town, which is subject to procedures set forth in the General Bylaws and the Massachusetts General Laws.

GUIDELINES

As part of the naming process, it is the Council's goal to inform the public when a proposal is brought before the Council for its consideration. When considering the naming of any public asset, the Council may consider the following guidelines:

1. Priority should be given to names carrying geographic, historical or cultural significance to the Town as a whole or to the area in which the public asset is located.
2. The public asset may be named after an individual who, or organization that, has made significant financial or civic contributions to the Town or that has made a direct financial grant to the Town for the purpose of developing a particular public asset.
3. Suggestions for naming of any public asset or portion thereof may come to the Town Council from any town official or member of the public. In the instances when the proposed naming of a public asset would constitute posthumous recognition, the Town Council will not entertain any naming discussion until a year has passed from the date of death.

PROCESS

Any person or entity may propose in writing that a Town asset be named. Said proposal shall be submitted to the Town Administrator's Office. Proposals should include substantial documentation to support the rationale for selecting the name, and to the extent possible should reflect a broad level of community backing, including from any boards or committees that have any connection to the asset that is proposed to be named.

To ensure that the Town Council is fully aware of the public's interest in a naming or renaming proposal, a public hearing shall be held by the Council before deliberations and a vote can occur. Public notice of such hearing shall be posted on the Town's website at least fourteen (14) days prior to the hearing.

Prior to the hearing, the Council shall solicit input from relevant Town boards and committees, surrounding property owners, residents, affected parties, and groups or individuals that the Council believes may contribute meaningful input. The Town entity having care, custody, management, and control of the public asset shall be invited to attend the hearing and to participate in the deliberations of the Town Council.

It being the intent of the Council to act sparingly in assigning names to Town assets, no asset shall be named or re-named without the affirmative vote of five (5) members.

CRITERIA

In deciding the appropriateness of any naming or renaming proposal, the Council shall consider:

- a) The significant public value of the public asset;
- b) The public interest to be served;
- c) Any historic events, people or places associated with the public asset;
- d) Any outstanding individual associated with the public asset;
- e) Any major gift associated with the public asset;
- f) Whether the naming proposal is for a time certain;
- g) Whether the Town has the legal power to rename the public asset, taking-into-account the terms of any trust, donation letter or other instrument that could limit that power; and
- h) Whether a naming agreement or other documentation is appropriate or necessary.

In addition, in deciding the appropriateness of any renaming proposal, the Council shall consider:

- a) Any existing agreement or documentation regarding the current name;
- b) The appropriateness of a new name, taking into consideration historical significance of the public asset or its current name; and
- c) Any costs associated with the renaming.

In making its decision to name or rename a public asset, the Town Council shall consider:

- a) Any other assets named, or currently being considered for naming, by the Council;
- b) Whether conditions or limitations should be placed on the maintenance or use of the public asset as a result of the naming or renaming;
- c) Compliance with state laws, town bylaws, regulations or policies; and
- d) Whether the naming should be restricted in duration.

This policy is meant to serve as a guide to those persons seeking to name or rename a public asset. Nothing herein shall be construed to limit the Council's authority to exercise its discretion based on the relevant facts and circumstances.

This policy may be amended or rescinded by the Council by majority vote.