

TOWN *of* HANOVER

Policy for Demonstrations, Vigils, and Public Protests

Purpose

The Town of Hanover is committed to upholding the constitutional rights of free speech and peaceful assembly. This policy provides guidelines for organizing and participating in public demonstrations, vigils, and protests to ensure they are conducted safely and by applicable laws while protecting public safety. Additionally, this policy is designed to enable communication between event organizers and town officials, including law enforcement, facilitating de-escalation when necessary.

Scope

This policy applies to all public gatherings held on private or town-owned property.

Definitions

- **Public Gathering:** An outdoor assembly of five or more individuals who are not related or do not reside in the same domicile.
- **Demonstration:** A public gathering expressing support for or opposing a cause, policy, or group, often involving signs, chants, and speeches.
- **Vigil:** A public gathering that is peaceful, often solemn, to commemorate an event, express solidarity, or bring attention to an issue.
- **Public Protest:** A public gathering organized to express objection or dissent, typically involving more participants and more visible actions, such as marches, sit-ins, or rallies.

Guidelines for Organizers

1. Event Registration Requirement

- Any demonstration, vigil, or protest must be registered with the Town Manager's Office at least **two business days before** the event.
- The registration process is designed to enable communication between organizers and the town, providing an opportunity to discuss logistics, safety measures, and de-escalation strategies if needed.

2. Registration Form

- The registration form must include the time, location, estimated number of participants, and specific needs like sound amplification or street closures.

3. Coordination with Public Safety

- Organizers are encouraged to meet with representatives from the Town, including, if applicable, representatives from affected or impacted departments, including but not limited to Police, Fire, Parks and Recreation, and Public Works. This meeting will address safety measures, crowd management, sanitation, and emergency procedures.
- The goal of this coordination is to
 1. ensure that the Town is informed about the event;
 2. protect free speech; and
 3. be prepared to support public safety.

Expectations for Participants

1. Peaceful Assembly

- All participants are expected to engage in lawful, peaceful behavior. Disruptive or violent actions, including destruction of property or interference with emergency services, are prohibited by Town ordinances and/or state statutes.

2. Compliance with Law Enforcement

- Participants must follow lawful instructions from law enforcement officers. Failure to comply may result in the dispersal of the event or legal action, as provided for in the Town ordinances and/or state statutes.

Provisions for De-escalation and Dispersal

1. Emphasis on De-escalation

- The registration and permit process allows town officials and law enforcement to better understand the event's goals and structure, fostering open communication with organizers. In the event of escalating tensions, town officials and law enforcement will prioritize de-escalation through communication and non-confrontational crowd management techniques.
- Organizers are encouraged to appoint liaison contacts who can work directly with the Town if issues arise during the event.

2. Grounds for Dispersal

- Town officials and law enforcement may disperse any event if:
 - It poses an imminent threat to public safety.
 - There is destruction of property or violence.
 - The property owner requested law enforcement to disperse.

3. Notification Before Dispersal

- Whenever possible, clear and audible warnings will be provided before any dispersal.
- The warnings will include the following information, where time and circumstances permit:
 - A safe exit route or safe exit routes
 - A time limit or approximate time to complete dispersal
 - Consequences of non-dispersal

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Town of Hanover Registration Form for Demonstrations, Vigils, and Public Protests

Event Registration Information

Please complete this form and submit it to the Town Manager's Office at least two business days before your event.

1. Organizer Information

- **Organizer/Organization Name:** _____
- **Contact Person:** _____
- **Phone Number:** _____
- **Email Address:** _____
- **Mailing Address:** _____

2. Event Details

- **Event Name/Title:** _____
- **Event Type:**
 - Demonstration
 - Vigil
 - Public Protest
 - Other (please specify): _____
- **Proposed Date(s) of Event:** _____
- **Event Start Time:** _____ **Event End Time:** _____
- **Event Location (please specify address, streets, parks, or public spaces):**

- **Private Property owner authorization signature**

- **Estimated Number of Participants:** _____

3. Event Description

- **Purpose of Event (briefly describe the goal or cause of the event):**

- **Activities Planned (march, rally, speeches, etc.):**

4. Public Safety and Logistics

- **Will you use sound amplification (e.g., microphones, speakers)?**
- The use of sound amplification may be subject to Town ordinances.
 - Yes
 - No
- **Will the event require town services (e.g., additional police presence, fire/EMS services, barriers)?**
 - Yes
 - NoIf yes, please specify:

- **Does the event involve any structures (e.g., tents, stages) or objects that require setup?**
 - Yes
 - NoIf yes, please describe:

5. De-escalation and Liaison Contact

- **Liaison Contact During Event (responsible for communication with law enforcement and town officials on-site):**
 - **Name:** _____
 - **Phone Number:** _____
 - **Email Address:** _____

If the event has more than one liaison, please provide the contact information for all liaisons on an additional sheet of paper.

- **De-escalation Strategies (examples are attached):**
Please describe any plans for de-escalating potential conflicts during the event:

Submission Process

- Submit the completed form to the **Town Manager's Office** at least two business days hours before the event.

De-Escalation Strategy Examples

- **Appoint Trained Marshals:** Employ visible, clearly identifiable marshals (e.g., those wearing armbands or vests) to guide participants, mediate disputes, and maintain calm.
- **Maintain Communication with Town Officials:** Assign one or more liaisons to maintain an open line of communication with law enforcement or public safety officials in case issues arise.
- **Encourage Self-Policing:** Cultivate a culture in which demonstrators hold each other accountable for remaining peaceful and non-confrontational.
- **Use De-Escalation Language:** Urge marshals and participants to stay calm, communicate in neutral tones, and avoid inflammatory or confrontational rhetoric.
- **Engage Counter-Protesters Peacefully:** If counter-protesters are present, refrain from direct engagement. Designate marshals to help maintain a safe distance and prevent provocation.
- **Encourage Orderly Movement:** If the demonstration involves marching, have marshals assist in keeping groups organized and preventing unsafe crowding.
- **Monitor for Agitators:** Identify and discourage individuals attempting to escalate tensions or provoke confrontation, whether from within the group or from outside.