

PUBLIC COMMENT AT SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS

The primary purpose of School Board meetings is to conduct the business of the Board related to Board policies, programs, and operations. The Board encourages residents to attend Board meetings so that they may become acquainted with the operations and programs of the schools.

The Board also recognizes the value of public comments on school and educational matters. Agendas for regularly scheduled Board meetings shall be published at least 48 hours in advance of each meeting in accordance with Board policy. Distribution will be at the Superintendent's office and at each school, on the district website, to local media and to town offices for posting as possible.

To permit fair and orderly expression of public comments at Board business meetings while still allowing the Board to conduct its business efficiently, the Board has established the procedure below for regular business meetings.

At special or emergency meetings, public comments will be limited to the topic(s) of the particular meeting.

In addition to speaking during the designated public comment portion of the agenda at Board meetings, members of the public are welcome to submit written comments on school and educational matters to the Board and Superintendent, or to submit requests to have items placed on a Board agenda, in accordance with applicable Board policies to the Board Chair.

1. The Board will include a public comment period, not to exceed 10 minutes on the agenda of its regular business meetings. Comments by individuals are limited to a maximum of two minutes at a meeting. Individuals may not relinquish a portion of their allotted time to another speaker. The time limits in this paragraph may be modified at a particular meeting at the discretion of the Board.

Citizens, employees, students, and others with an interest in the Board's business are welcome to comment as provided by the policy.

2. The Board will hear public comments from residents of the school unit first. If there is time remaining in the public comment period once all residents have had the opportunity to speak, the Board will permit comments from non-residents. Individuals who wish to speak are required to fill out the sign-in form available at each Board meeting, prior to the beginning of the public comment period, and review a copy of this policy. Each individual will be required to state their name and town/city of residence before beginning their remarks.

Groups may be asked to choose a designated speaker. Speakers are requested to avoid duplication or repetition of remarks made by others.

3. The Board Chair is responsible for ensuring the orderly conduct of Board meetings and for ensuring compliance with this policy, including the following rules of order:
 - a. Speakers will be recognized by the Board Chair, and comments should be addressed to the Board Chair, who may refer questions to the Superintendent or other board members. The Board will hear comments, but there will be no discussion during this period. Requests for information or concerns that require further research may be referred to the Superintendent for further action. If necessary, additional information will be provided at a future meeting.
 - b. Any written materials to be passed out to the Board should first be shared with the Board Chair or the Superintendent.
 - c. Speakers are expected to follow rules of common etiquette and decorum, including refraining from using vulgar and/or obscene language, yelling, threatening others using words or by other actions, making defamatory comments, or otherwise engaging in any activity that disrupts orderly meeting progress. Examples of disruptive conduct include, but are not limited to, exceeding the allotted time limits, talking over, or interrupting others, offering repetitive comments, and offering comment on matters unrelated to the school unit's programs, policies, or operations.
 - d. Discussion of personnel matters is not permitted during the public comment period due to the privacy, confidentiality, and due process rights of school unit employees. For purposes of this policy, "discussion of a personnel matter" means any discussion of job performance or conduct of a school unit employee, including complaints or positive/complimentary comments about them.
 - e. Discussion of matters involving individual students are also not permitted during the public comment period due to the privacy, confidentiality, and due process rights of the school unit's students.
 - f. Any concerns about personnel matters and/or student matters should be directed to the Superintendent or another appropriate administrator outside of Board meetings so that they can be addressed through an alternative channel and in a manner consistent with privacy, confidentiality, and due process rights of the individuals involved.
 - g. The Board Chair will stop any public comment that is contrary to these rules.

- h. Individuals who disrupt a Board meeting may be asked to leave to allow the Board to conduct its business in an orderly manner. The Board Chair may request the assistance of law enforcement if necessary to address disruptions or safety concerns.

Legal Reference: 20-A MRSA § 1001(20)

Cross Reference: 20-A MRSA § 6101

1 MRSA § 405

BE – School Board Meetings

BEDB – Agenda

BEDB-R – Agenda Format

BEC – Executive Sessions

KE – Public Concerns and Complaints

Adopted: April 11, 2017

Previous Revisions: September 10, 2019, October 26, 2021, November 2022, April 25, 2023

Revised: August 8, 2023

Reviewed: March 5, 2024