

Public Participation at School Committee Meetings

All regular, special and emergency meetings of the School Committee are open to the public. The public is cordially invited to attend and to participate in School Committee meetings as provided in this policy. This policy applies both to meetings of the full School Committee and to meetings of School Committee subcommittees.

The School Committee will designate a portion of its agenda as an opportunity for public participation. The School Committee is committed to upholding the First Amendment rights of all speakers and will therefore not impose any restrictions on the content of speech during public comment time other than constitutionally permissible restrictions on speech such as true threats, fighting words, obscenity, or incitement to violence. The School Committee may also impose reasonable restrictions on conduct that disrupts the functioning of School Committee meetings.

Members of the public may address the School Committee within the guidelines provided in this policy. The Chair shall be responsible for maintaining proper order and compliance with these guidelines.

The following guidelines shall apply to public participation at School Committee meetings.

- A. All speakers shall receive at least 3 minutes of time to speak. The time limit for speakers may be extended for any public comment session by majority vote of the School Committee.
- B. All speakers shall sign up to speak at the beginning of the School Committee meeting and shall provide their town of residence. The Chair shall call on speakers in the order in which they appear on the sign-up list, with the exception that residents and employees of the school district shall be given the opportunity to speak before non-residents.
- C. Public comment time shall close when all persons on the sign-up sheet have spoken, or when 30 minutes have elapsed. The School Committee may extend the time for public comment by majority vote.

D. Public comment shall occur at the beginning of all School Committee and subcommittee meetings but the School Committee may also add additional times for public comment before particular agenda items.

In addition to verbal comments, the School Committee welcomes and appreciates written comments from members of the public.

LEGAL REF:

MA G.L. c. 30A, §§18-25

Cross Reference:

BE – School Committee Meetings

BEC – Executive Session

BEDB – Agenda Format

BEDD – Rules of Order

KE – Public Complaints