

ADOPTED: November 21, 2002

FILE: BEDH

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT BOARD MEETINGS

Regular, special and emergency meetings of the Board are open to the public. The Board, the elected representative body of the school unit, will provide appropriate opportunities for citizens to express interests and concerns related to the matters under consideration by the Board. The public is cordially invited to attend and participate in Board meetings as set forth in this policy.

The intent is to allow a fair and adequate opportunity for the public to be heard, to provide adequate time for the Board to obtain necessary information on subjects before it, and to ensure that the time allowed for public discussion does not interfere with the fulfillment of the scheduled agenda.

Board meetings are conducted for the purpose of carrying on the official business of the school system. The meetings are not public forum meetings, but are meetings which are held for the Board to do its business in public. The minutes of each public meeting record the actions taken and show how the board voted on each item presented for action. Minutes are available to the public during normal business hours in the Office of the Superintendent.

Orderly conduct of a meeting does not permit spontaneous discussion from the audience, nor among Board members. Public participations should be limited to time periods designated on the Board's agenda. **At the Chair's discretion, public participation may be permitted just prior to Board discussion of particular agenda items.**

In order that the Board may fairly and adequately discharge its overall responsibilities, citizens or groups wishing to address the Board on a topic not otherwise on the agenda must submit a request in writing to the Superintendent at least one full week in advance of the scheduled meeting. The Superintendent and/or Board Chair may add the item to the agenda at their discretion.

An agenda shall be published in advance of each meeting in accordance with Board policy. Copies will be posted and/or available prior to regular meetings, at the Superintendents Office, Schools and will be mailed to Town Offices. Anyone desiring additional information about an agenda item should direct such inquiries to the Office of the Superintendent.

The following ground rules shall guide public participation at meetings:

- A. Citizens of the school unit, employees and others with legitimate interest in the Board's business are welcome to participate as provided in this policy. Others may be recognized to speak at the Board's discretion. Individual employees and/or employee groups will not be permitted to discuss matters for which other, more appropriate forums are provided.
- B. The Chair may limit the time allotted for comments on a particular topic as well as the time each individual may speak.
- C. In the event of a sizeable audience, the Chair may require persons interested in speaking to sign up so they may be called on in the most expedient order.
- D. All speakers must identify themselves as they begin talking. Speakers are not permitted to share gossip, make defamatory comments, or use abusive or vulgar language. The Chair has the authority to stop any presentation which violates the public participation guidelines or the privacy rights of others. Persons who disrupt the meeting may be asked to leave, and the Chair may request law enforcement assistance if necessary to restore order.
- E. Constructive comments, suggestions and questions are welcomed and given consideration by the Board. All speakers are to address the Chair and direct questions or comments to particular Board members or the Superintendent only with approval of the Chair. The Chair may, at his/her discretion, refer questions to the Superintendent to address at a later time.
- F. Members of the Board and the Superintendent may ask questions of any person who addresses the Board but are expected to refrain

from arguing or debating issues. Questions must be addressed through the Chair.

- G. No complaints or allegations will be allowed at Board meetings concerning any person employed by the school system. Personal matters or complaints concerning student or staff issues will not be considered in a public meeting but will be referred through established resolution procedures.
- H. In order to make efficient use of limited time, the Board discourages duplication or repetition of comments to the Board. The Board requests that groups or organizations be represented by designated spokespersons.