

FILE: BDDH

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT BOARD MEETINGS

The public is cordially invited to attend and participate in Board meetings. Regular, special, and emergency meetings of the Board and its subcommittees 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.

Maine Law does not require that the public be permitted to speak at School Board meetings; however, the Board's intent is to allow a fair and adequate opportunity for the public to be heard. The Board Chair will allow time for public comment that does not interfere with the fulfillment of the scheduled agenda.

Board meetings are conducted for the purpose of conducting the official business of the school system. The meetings permit the public's elected representatives to take action on School District business. During each meeting a record is made of the actions taken and how Board members 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 requires that discussion from the public and among Board members be structured. Opportunity for public participation shall be limited to time periods designated on the Board agenda. The Chair may also set public comment periods in relation to individual agenda items or may limit or forego public comment altogether, when necessary.

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 prior to the scheduled meeting. The Superintendent or Board Chair may add the item to the agenda at his/her 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 the regular meetings at the Superintendent's Office and in each school. Anyone desiring additional information about an agenda item should direct inquiries to the Office of the Superintendent.

The following ground rules shall guide public participation at meetings:

1. To be eligible to address the Board, an individual should reside within the school unit, be an employee of the school unit, or be invited by the Board or Superintendent to speak.
2. The Chair may limit the time allotted for comments on a particular topic as well as the time each individual may speak.
3. In the event of a sizable audience, the Chair may require persons interested in speaking to sign up so they may be called on in the most expedient order.

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4. All speakers must identify themselves by first and last names and their Town of residence when they begin to speak. Speakers are not permitted to share gossip, make defamatory comments, or use abusive or vulgar language. The Chair has the authority to stop any presentations that violate these public participation guidelines or the privacy rights of others. Persons who disrupt the meeting will be asked to leave, and the Chair may request law enforcement assistance if necessary to restore order.
5. 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 the approval of the Chair. The Chair may, at his/her discretion, refer questions to the Superintendent to address at a later time.
6. Except in an emergency, the Board will not attempt to decide upon any question before full examination and an opportunity for the Superintendent to research the matter and make his/her recommendation to the Board.
7. 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.
8. No complaints or allegations will be allowed at Board meetings concerning any person employed by the school system. Personnel matters or complaints concerning student or staff issues will not be considered in a public meeting but will be referred through established resolution procedures as permitted.
9. In order to make efficient use of limited time, duplication or repetition of comments to the Board is strongly discouraged. The Board requests that groups or organizations be represented by designated spokespersons.
10. Workshop meetings of the full Board or Board subcommittees are working sessions with a limited focus. In general, public comment periods will not be provided at workshops. Exceptions to this practice are at the discretion of the Chair.

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