

BEDH - Public Participation at Board Meetings

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT BOARD MEETINGS

The primary purpose of a School Board meeting is to conduct the business of the School Board related to policies, programs, and operations. All regular, special and emergency meetings of the Board are open to the public. The public is cordially invited to attend and participate in Board meetings as provided in this policy.

Although Board meetings are not public forums, the Board will provide appropriate opportunities for citizens to express opinions and concerns related to the matters under consideration by the Board. The intent is to allow a fair and adequate opportunity for the public to be heard and to provide adequate time for the Board to obtain information and opinion on subjects before it, while ensuring that the time allowed for public discussion does not interfere with the fulfillment of the scheduled agenda.

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

A. The School Board will include a public comment period on the agenda of its regular business meetings. Individuals may speak once and are limited to a maximum of 3 minutes. The length of the public comment period and the time limits in this paragraph may be modified at a particular meeting at the discretion of the Chair. B. Residents of RSU 1 are welcome to participate as provided in this policy, as well as parent/guardians, students, and employees of RSU 1. If there is time remaining in the public comment period once all residents of RSU 1 as well as parents/guardians, students and employees of RSU 1 have had the opportunity to speak, the Chair may permit comments from others. Others may be recognized and speak at the Chair's discretion. Individuals who wish to speak may be required to complete out a sign-in form. Each individual will be required to state their name and the town/city of residence before speaking. C. Speakers will be recognized by the Chair. Requests for information or concerns that require further research may be referred to the Superintendent for further action, if necessary. D. Speakers are expected to follow 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, interrupting others, offering repetitive comments, and offering comment on matters unrelated to the school unit's programs policies, or operations.

E. Discussion of personnel matters are not permitted during the public comment period due to the

privacy, confidentiality, and due process rights of school unit employees. For the purposes of this policy, “discussion of personnel matter” means any discussion of job performance or conduct of a school unit employee, including complaints or positive/complimentary comments about them. F. Discussion of matters including students is also not permitted during the public comment period due to the privacy, confidentiality, and due process rights of school unit students. G. Any concerns about personnel matters and/or student matters should be directed to the Superintendent or another appropriate administrator outside of School 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. H. The Chair will stop any public comment that is contrary to these rules. Individuals who disrupt a School Board meeting may be asked to leave to allow the School Board to conduct its business in an orderly manner. The Chair may request the assistance of law enforcement if necessary to address disruptions or safety concerns.

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 Superintendent’s office and on the School Department’s website. Anyone desiring additional information about an agenda item should direct such inquiries to the Office of the Superintendent.

Legal Reference: 20-A MRSA § 1001 (20), 20-A MRSA § 6101, 1 MSRA § 405

Cross Reference: BE – Regular Board Meeting
BEC – Executive Session
BEDA – Notification of Board Meetings
BEDB – Agenda Preparation and Dissemination
BEDD – Rules of Order
KE – Public Concerns and Complaints

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