

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETINGS

All regular and special meetings of the School Committee shall be open to the public, except for “Executive Sessions” which will be held as prescribed by the Statutes of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

The School Committee welcomes citizens of the District to attend its meetings so that they may become better acquainted with the operations and the programs of our local public schools. In addition, the Committee would like the opportunity to hear the public’s ideas .

In order that all citizens who wish to be heard before the Committee have the opportunity to speak and to ensure the ability of the Committee to conduct the District’s business in an orderly manner, the following rules and procedures have been adopted by the Committee:

1. At each regularly scheduled School Committee meeting, individuals or group representatives will be invited to address the Committee. The Chairperson shall determine the length of the public participation segment.
2. Each speaker will be allowed two (2) minutes to present his/her statement. The presiding Chairperson may permit extension of this time limit.
3. Topics for discussion are not limited to those items listed on the School Committee meeting agenda for that evening. However, items not on the agenda must be brought up during public participation portion of the meeting. Due to the requirements of Open Meeting Law, the School Committee may not be able to respond to items brought up during public participation.
4. All remarks will be addressed through the Chairperson of the meeting.
5. Speakers may offer such objective feedback regarding school operations and programs as concern them, but in public session the Committee will not hear personal complaints regarding school personnel nor against any member of the school community. Staff and student confidentiality must be preserved. Under most circumstances, administrative channels are the proper means for disposition of legitimate complaints involving District personnel.
6. Written comments that would exceed two (2) spoken minutes may be presented to the Committee before or after the meeting for the Committee members’ review and consideration at an appropriate time. Letters or emails addressed to the School Committee will be shared with the Committee members and will be responded to by either the Committee Chair, Vice Chair or appropriate administrator. Emails to the Committee are considered public as defined by Mass General Law.

Public Participation is not a discussion, debate, or dialogue between or among citizens and the School Committee. Rather it is intended to offer citizens an opportunity to express their opinion on issues of School Committee business. While the Committee and /or administrators will not typically respond to citizen comments or questions posed during Public Participation, the Chair, as presiding officer of the meeting, may answer or request an answer to a question if he/she deems it readily available. Improper conduct and remarks will not be allowed. Defamatory or abusive remarks are always out of order. If a speaker persists in improper conduct or remarks, the Chairperson may terminate that individual’s privilege of address.

Approved: 11/20/14