

Public Comment and Participation at School Committee Meetings (~~Revised Policy~~)

School Committee meetings are conducted in accordance with the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30, s. 18. In addition, the School Committee believes that the public should have an opportunity to comment to the Committee on issues that affect the school district and are within the scope of the Committee's responsibilities. Therefore the Committee has set aside a period of time at each School Committee meeting to hear from the public.

If the Committee believes that an issue requires a broader dialogue with the public, the Committee may schedule a separate public hearing on that issue.

Public Comment 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 at Public Comment, the Chair, as presiding officer of the meeting, may answer or request an answer to a question if s/he deems it expeditious. Further, should the Chair believe that an issue or question falls outside the purview of the School Committee, s/he may request that citizens direct it to the appropriate person or body so that the matter is given proper consideration.

The following process will govern Public Comment and participation at the School Committee meetings.

Public Comment:

The School Committee will have a 15-minute Public Comment section at each regularly scheduled School

Committee meeting according to the following guidelines:

M.G.L c. 30, s. 20F provides, in relevant part, that: "No person shall address a public meeting of a governmental body without permission of the Chair, and all persons shall, at the request of the Chair, be silent." The School Committee Chair will favor those speakers who sign up in advance under the procedure specified below.

1. A sign-up sheet will be available as people enter the meeting, and people will speak in the order in which they sign up, unless more than one person wishes to speak on a single topic, in which case the Chair may call on them together.

2. Any person wishing to speak must identify him or herself by name and address, and specific interest for wishing to speak. The Chair ~~may~~ favor, in no particular order, those speakers who are Brookline residents or, in appropriate circumstances, a Town of Brookline employee, parent, or guardian of a Public Schools of Brookline student, or any Public Schools of Brookline student.

3. There will be a time limit of 5 minutes per person, which will be enforced by the Chair of the meeting. If the number of people wishing to speak exceeds 3, the Chair may, at his/her discretion, limit individual comments to no more than 3 minutes per person. In addition, parents/guardians of children attending the Public Schools of Brookline and Brookline residents shall be given priority. Written comments longer than the permitted time may be presented to the Chair before or after the meeting. All remarks will be addressed through the Chair of the meeting. Comments made during any public comment portion of the meeting do not necessarily reflect the views or positions of the School Committee.

4. The amount of time allocated for the session will be a maximum of 15 minutes provided that the Chair may extend any individual session in his/her discretion.

5. The session will be held at a regular time agreed to by the School Committee.

6. Discussion of individual personnel issues will be prohibited.

7. Votes by the School Committee will not be taken during Public Comment.

8. Responses to concerns will be made only by the Superintendent or Chair of the meeting, or other members, at the Chair's discretion.

9. On those issues that can be resolved by directing citizens to the appropriate staff, the Superintendent or Chair will advise the citizen of appropriate steps to take.

10. The Chair of the meeting, after a warning, reserves the right to terminate speech which is not constitutionally protected because it constitutes true threats that are likely to provoke a violent reaction and cause a breach of the peace, or incitement of imminent lawless conduct, or contains obscenities. ~~may terminate any individual's privilege of address for inappropriate conduct or statement.~~

Participation Regarding Docketed Items:

In addition to ~~any~~the Public Comment section at each meeting, the public is invited to remain for the whole meeting and may be invited to speak on any docketed issue, at the discretion of the Chair. ~~Should the Chair invite comments on docketed items, s/he will request that citizens in attendance who wish to speak signify as such by raising their hand.~~

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Revision approved by Brookline School Committee: 11/3/05, #05-122

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