

Belmont - 1006

MASC - BEDH

Public Comment at School Committee Meetings

All regular and special meetings of the School Committee shall be open to the public. Executive sessions will be held only as prescribed by the Statutes of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

The School Committee believes that one of its paramount responsibilities is to receive comment from the people it represents and serves. The public is encouraged to attend meetings of the School Committee so that they may become better acquainted with the operations and the programs of our local public schools.

Public comment is not a discussion, debate, or dialogue between individuals and the School Committee. It is an individual's opportunity to express an opinion on issues within the School Committee's authority. The Committee may respond to a public comment by taking it under consideration when deliberating on an agenda item or referring an issue to the administration for appropriate action or response.

Meetings of the School Committee shall include an agenda item titled "Public Comment." This section of the meeting provides the opportunity to the public to comment or raise questions regarding school related issues, except where separate public comment is indicated on the agenda in relation to a specific agenda topic.

To ensure the ability of the School Committee to conduct the District's business in an orderly manner, the following rules and procedures are adopted:

1. At the start of each regularly scheduled School Committee meeting, instructions will be provided for those who wish to participate in Public Comment. All speakers are encouraged to present their remarks in a respectful manner.
2. Speakers shall first identify their full name and city/town.
3. Speakers shall direct all comments and questions to the School Committee Chairperson.
4. Speakers will be allowed up to three (3) minutes to present their material. The presiding Chair may permit a reduction or extension of this time limit, in extenuating circumstances. Time may not be shared between speakers. If there are numerous requests to address the committee on the same subject, the chairperson may select representatives to speak on the issues.

5. Topics for discussion should be limited to those items within the School Committee's scope of authority. The authority of the School Committee primarily concerns the review and approval of the budget of the district's public schools, the performance of the Superintendent, and the educational goals and policies of the district's public schools. Comments and complaints regarding school personnel (apart from the Superintendent) or students are generally prohibited unless those comments and complaints concern matters within the scope of School Committee authority.
6. 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 to imminent lawless conduct, or contains obscenities.
7. The presiding Chair of the meeting shall establish the duration of the comment period.
8. Comments that may exceed the time permitted by the Chair may be presented to the Chair in written form before or after the meeting. The School Committee may receive comments at any time via publicly available contact information.
9. Comments made during the public comment portion of the meeting do not necessarily reflect the views or positions of the Belmont School Committee.

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. c. 30A: 18-25

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