

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETINGS

School Committee meetings are conducted for the purpose of carrying on the official business of the school system. All regular, special and emergency meetings of the School Committee are open to the public. The public is cordially invited to attend and participate in School Committee meetings as provided in this policy. This policy applies only to meetings of the full School Committee, not to meetings of School Committee subcommittees.

Although School Committee meetings are not public forums, the School Committee will provide appropriate opportunities for members of the public to express opinions and concerns related to the matters under consideration by the School Committee. The intent is to allow a fair and adequate opportunity for the public to be heard and to provide adequate time for the School Committee 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.

During the time allotted for public participation, members of the public may speak on any subject directly related to the operations of the schools, except for specific personnel or student matters or complaints concerning specific employees or students, which shall be addressed through established policies and procedures.

Members of the public may address the School Committee within the guidelines provided in this policy. The Chair shall be responsible for maintaining proper order and compliance with these guidelines.

The following guidelines shall apply to public participation at School Committee meetings.

- A. Citizens and employees of the school unit are welcome to participate as provided in this policy. Others may be recognized to speak at the Chair's discretion. Individual employees and/or employee groups will not be permitted to discuss matters for which complaint or grievance procedures are provided.
- B. The Chair may limit the time allotted for comments on a particular topic as well as the time each individual may speak.
- C. In the event of a sizeable audience, the Chair may require persons interested in speaking to sign up so they may be called on in a fair and efficient manner.
- D. During the time set aside for public participation, the Chair will be responsible for recognizing all speakers, who must identify themselves and their place of residence as they begin talking.
- E. Speakers are not permitted to share gossip, make defamatory comments, or use abusive or vulgar language.
- F. All speakers are to address the Chair and direct questions or comments to particular School Committee members or the Superintendent only with approval of the Chair. Requests for information or concerns that require further research may be referred to the Superintendent to be addressed at a later time.
- G. Members of the School Committee and the Superintendent may ask questions of any person who addresses the School Committee but are expected to refrain from arguing or debating issues. Questions must be addressed through the Chair.



- H. Discussion of specific personnel matters or student matters, and complaints concerning specific staff or students will not be considered, but will be referred through established policies and procedures.
- I. In order to make efficient use of meeting time, the School Committee discourages duplication or repetition of comments to the School Committee. The School Committee requests that groups or organizations be represented by designated spokespersons.
- J. The Chair has the authority to stop any presentation that violates these guidelines or the privacy rights of others.
- K. Persons who disrupt the meeting may be asked to leave, and the Chair may request law enforcement assistance as necessary to restore order.
- L. In the event of an emergency or substantial disruption, the Chair may declare a recess to restore order or may declare the meeting adjourned or to be continued to a designated time and place.

An agenda shall be published in advance of each meeting in accordance with School Committee policy. Copies will be available prior to regular meetings and posted at the Office of the Superintendent of Schools, the main office of each Bangor School Department school building (K-12), and on the Bangor School Department website – www.bangorschools.net. Anyone desiring additional information about an agenda item should direct such inquiries to the Office of the Superintendent.

Opportunity for public participation at School Committee subcommittee meetings is not required, but may be permitted in accordance with the School Committee’s policy and/or rules pertaining to the operations of subcommittees.

Legal Reference: 1 MRSA § 401 et seq.
20 MRSA § 1001 (20)

Cross Reference: BDC – Executive Sessions
BDDA – Notification of School Committee Meetings
BDDC – Agenda Preparation
BDDE – Rules of Order
JFH – Complaints by Students or Parents

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