

<i>Policy</i>	<i>Title</i> SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION	<i>Code</i> BEDH
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HOLLISTON

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 encourages members of the Holliston school community to attend its meetings so that they may become better acquainted with the operations and programs of the Holliston Public Schools (HPS). In addition, the School Committee would like the opportunity to hear comments from members of the Holliston school community on matters within the scope of their authority. These matters include the budget for HPS, the performance of the Superintendent, and the educational goals and policies of HPS.

In order to be heard by the Committee and to ensure the ability of the School Committee to conduct HPS business in an orderly manner, the following rules and procedures are adopted, consistent with state and federal free speech laws:

1. At each regularly scheduled School Committee meeting, individuals or group representatives who have registered to speak (for example, via a sign up sheet) will be invited to address the School Committee during its 15-minute Public Comments segment. Public comment shall occur prior to discussion of agenda items, unless the Chair determines that there is a good reason for rearranging the order at a public meeting that is unrelated to deterring participation in public comment.
2. All speakers are encouraged to present their remarks in a respectful manner.
3. Speakers must begin their remarks by stating their name, town or city of residence, and affiliation with HPS. All remarks will be addressed through the Chair of the meeting.
4. Public comment may concern items that are not on the School Committee agenda, but which are within the scope of the School Committee's authority. Therefore, any comments involving staff members or students must concern the educational goals, policies, or budget of HPS, or the performance of the Superintendent.
5. Assuming that four (4) or fewer speakers request to participate in public comment, each speaker will be allowed three (3) minutes each to present to the School Committee. If five (5) or more speakers register to participate in public comment, then each speaker will be allowed (2) minutes each to present to the School Committee.
6. Large groups addressing the same topic are encouraged to consolidate their remarks and/or select a spokesperson to comment on their behalf during public comment.
7. Speakers may not assign their time to another speaker, and in general, extensions of time will not be permitted. However, speakers who require reasonable accommodations on the basis of a speech-related disability or who require language interpretation services may be allotted a total of five (5) minutes to present to the School Committee. Speakers must notify the School Committee by telephone or email at least forty-eight (48) hours in advance of the meeting if they wish to request an extension of time due to one of the reasons listed above. Comments longer than three (3) minutes may be presented to the Committee in writing before or after the meeting for review and consideration.
8. The Chair of the meeting may not interrupt speakers who have been recognized to speak; however, the Chair reserves the right to terminate speech which is not Constitutionally protected because it constitutes true threats, incitement to imminent lawless conduct, comments that were found by a court of law to be defamatory, and/or sexually explicit comments made to appeal to prurient interests. Verbal comments will also be curtailed once they exceed the time limits outlined paragraphs 5 and 7 of this policy and/or to the extent they exceed the scope of the School Committee's authority.

Disclaimer: Public comment is not a time for debate, nor does it require a response from the School Committee. Comments made at public comment do not reflect the views or the positions of the School Committee. The School Committee does not have the authority to prevent all speech that may be upsetting and/or offensive during public comment due to Constitutional free speech provisions.

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Procedure Reference:	

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