

SCHOOL BOARD BYLAWS

Decorum and Order-School Board Meetings

A. Purpose of decorum and order during meetings

The School Board determines that decorum and order are necessary during School Board Meetings. The purposes for maintaining decorum and order are:

1. to ensure that the affairs of the School Board and School Board Committees may be conducted in an open, safe and orderly manner during meetings;
2. that all persons signed up to address the School Board during public comment sections of meetings have the opportunity to do so in an orderly and respectful manner and without being interrupted;
3. that persons in attendance may observe and hear the proceedings of the School Board without distraction and interruption;
4. that students and other young audience members who attend or watch such meetings are not subject to inappropriate language or conduct;
5. that School Board Members and School Division employees or other agents can transact the business of the School Board and the School Division with minimal disruption.

B. Limitations on addressing the School Board

Persons addressing the School Board during public comment sections of the meeting shall:

1. Limit their comments to matters relevant to PreK-12 public education in Virginia Beach and the business of the School Board and the School Division.
2. Refrain from obscenity, vulgarity, profanity, and comments or actions with the intent to incite violence or other breach of peace.
3. Comply with the time limits and other rules for public comment set forth in the agenda or Bylaws.
4. During special meetings or public hearings, the School Board may set different rules or time limits for public comments.

C. Other expressive activities during meetings

1. Public comments during meetings limited to matters relevant to public education and the business of the School Board

At regular School Board Meetings, the School Board accepts public comment during designated sections of the Meeting Agenda. The public comment sections of School Board Meetings are limited public forums for the sole purpose of accepting comments from members of the public relevant to PreK-12 public education in Virginia Beach and the business of the School Board and the School Division. The School Board does not accept other forms of public comment during Meetings or at those times immediately preceding or following a Meeting.

2. Expressive activities during meetings

To maintain decorum and order and conduct the business of the School Board and the School Division during meetings, expressive activities by members of the public in meetings will be limited or prohibited. On any day that a meeting is scheduled to take place, the School Board prohibits certain expressive activity, including but not limited to the following, expressive activities:

- Petitioning, demonstrating, picketing, pamphlet distribution, conducting polls, or solicitation in the Building where the Meeting is taking place
- Displaying or using signs, posters or other items brought into the meeting room that block the view of persons in or observing the meeting or create a safety concern. Possession of such items while in the meeting location will not be prohibited
- Use of noise making devices
- Use of excessive cheering, booing, clapping, or similar activity that disrupts the meeting, as determined by the Chair or designee
- Calling out or making comments when not called to address the School Board
- Intimidation, harassment or threats to persons in the meeting or who are entering or departing the meeting or the location of the meeting
- Instigating or attempting to instigate confrontations or other conduct for the purpose of disrupting the meeting
- Other conduct that violates decorum and order as determined by the Chair or designee

3. School Administration Building or other locations for meetings are not open public forums for public expression

The School Administration Building (or another building or location where a meeting is scheduled to take place) its grounds and reserved parking spaces are not open for expressive activities unless a facility use request or application has been approved by the Superintendent or designees. The Superintendent or designees are authorized to designate areas of the School Administration Building (or other building or location for a meeting), the grounds and parking lots that may be considered for facility use request or application. The Superintendent or designee are authorized to develop and implement regulations and/or procedures related to such facility use requests or applications.

D. Other methods of communicating with the School Board

The School Board encourages citizens and other interested parties to communicate with the School Board regarding matters related to public education. Due to the limited time scheduled to conduct business and the need to follow approved agenda items, School Board meetings may not be conducive for all forms of communication to the School Board. Persons seeking to communicate with the School Board may contact School Board Members through other methods of communication, including SchoolBoard@VBCPSBoard.com or email individual School Board Members in addition to those provided at School Board meetings.

This Bylaw does not preclude persons addressing the School Board from delivering the School Board or its Clerk written materials including reports, statements, exhibits, letters, or signed petitions prior to or after a Meeting. While public speakers are addressing the School Board, they may not approach the School Board to hand out items but will instead be directed to leave items with the Clerk or designee for the School Board to consider after the Meeting.

This Bylaw does not preclude persons called to address the School Board during public comment sections from using a chart, graph or other item during their public comments so long as that item does not interfere with the School Board and other persons observing the Meeting from hearing or seeing the speaker and the item does not create a safety issue or otherwise violate the decorum and order rules. Furthermore, nothing herein shall be interpreted to prohibit members of the public from communicating with the School Board or the School Administration on matters relevant to PreK-12 public education in Virginia Beach and the business of the School Board and the School Division at times other than meetings.

- E.** The Chair with the assistance of the Superintendent or their designees shall preserve decorum and order in the room where the Meeting is taking place and shall decide all questions of decorum and order during the Meeting. School Board Members may vote to overrule the Chair's or designee's decision at the time that the Chair or designee makes the decision. The

Chair or designee is authorized to work with the Superintendent, designees, law enforcement and authorized agents to maintain order and decorum prior to the start of, during and immediately after any Meeting.

- F. The School Administration, law enforcement and authorized agents will have responsibility for maintaining decorum and order outside of the Meeting room and outside of a building where a meeting will be or is taking place.
- G. No person attending a meeting of the School Board, in any capacity, shall use, or allow to sound, any device in a manner that disrupts the conduct of business within the room in which the School Board or a Committee thereof is meeting. Notice of this restriction shall be posted outside of School Board Meeting Room and on the agenda for any School Board meeting.
- H. At the request of the Chair or Superintendent or their designees, a city police officer or other law enforcement officer shall act as sergeant-at-arms at all School Board meetings.

Legal Reference

Code of Virginia §18.2-128, as amended. Trespass upon church or school property.

Code of Virginia §18.2-404, as amended. Punishment for using abusive language to another.

Code of Virginia §18.2-406, as amended. What constitutes an unlawful assembly; punishment.

Code of Virginia § 18.2-415, as amended. Disorderly conduct in public places.

Virginia Beach City Code § 23-14, as amended. Disorderly Conduct in public places.

Related Links

School Board [Bylaw 1-47](#)

School Board [Policy 7-16](#)

Adopted by School Board: January 20, 1998

Amended by School Board: August 17, 1999

Amended by School Board: October 17, 2000

Amended by School Board: February 20, 2001

Revised by Order of United States District Court Eastern District of Virginia: May 18, 2001

Amended by School Board: August 18, 2015

Amended by School Board: August 2, 2016

Amended by School Board: March 27, 2018

Amended by School Board: October 26, 2021

[Amended/Reviewed by School Board: 2022](#)

APPROVED AS TO
LEGAL SUFFICIENCY


