

FOX CHAPEL AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

Book	Policy Manual
Section	900 Community
Title	Public Participation in Board Meetings
Code	903
Status	Active
Adopted	June 13, 2022

Purpose

The Board recognizes the value to school governance of public comment on educational issues and the importance of involving members of the public in Board meetings. The Board also recognizes its responsibility for proper governance of the district and the need to conduct its business in an orderly and efficient manner.

Authority

The Board shall establish guidelines to govern public participation in Board meetings necessary to conduct its meeting and to maintain order.[\[1\]](#)

In order to permit fair and orderly expression of public comment, the Board shall provide an opportunity at each open meeting of the Board for residents and taxpayers to comment on matters of concern, official action or deliberation before the Board prior to official action by the Board.[\[2\]](#)[\[3\]](#)

If the Board determines there is not sufficient time at a meeting for public comments, the comment period may be deferred to the next regular meeting or to a special meeting occurring before the next regular meeting.[\[2\]](#)

Delegation of Responsibility

The presiding officer at each open Board meeting shall follow Board policy for the conduct of open meetings. Where the presiding officer's ruling is disputed, it may be overruled by a majority of those Board members present and voting.[\[4\]](#)[\[5\]](#)

Guidelines

The presiding officer may:

1. Interrupt or terminate a participant's statement when the statement is too lengthy, personally directed, abusive, obscene, irrelevant, intemperate, or deemed to be out of order.
2. Request any individual to leave the meeting when that person does not observe reasonable decorum.
3. Request the assistance of law enforcement officers to remove a disorderly person when his/her conduct interferes with the orderly progress of the meeting.

4. Call a recess or adjourn to another time when the lack of public decorum interferes with the orderly conduct of the meeting.

Public Comment

At Regular Meetings and Agenda Sessions, two (2) periods for public comment shall be scheduled. The first period shall be for comment on items that are scheduled for deliberation or official action at that meeting. A second period for public comment on other matters of concern shall occur before the meeting is adjourned.

Whenever issues identified by the participant are subject to remediation under policies and procedures of the Board, they shall be dealt with in accordance with those policies and procedures and the organizational structure of the district.

Public comment is limited to residents or taxpayers of this district. Residents or taxpayers may offer public comment in person or by telephone. Speakers may register to comment by contacting the Board Secretary by email (boardsecretary@fcsd.edu), telephone (412-967-2413), or at the district office (611 Field Club Road, Pittsburgh, 15238) during business hours but no later than 12:00pm on the day of the scheduled meeting or appearing in person at the scheduled meeting. Residents or taxpayers who register with the Board Secretary must provide their name, address, subject of comment or topic to be addressed, group affiliation, and whether they will be commenting by person or by telephone. The Board Secretary will list the speaker to comment during the appropriate comment period. Speakers who wish to comment by telephone must provide a phone number where they may be reached during the scheduled meeting. The sign-in sheets will also be provided at each open meeting for those attending the meeting who wish to offer public comment and did not register in advance. Those registering in person must provide their name, address, subject of comment or topic to be addressed, and any group affiliation. Should, at the discretion of the presiding officer, time permit, additional in-person speakers may be permitted.

Participants must be recognized and granted the floor by the presiding officer. During the designated public comment period, the Board Secretary will make two (2) attempts to call a resident or taxpayer who registered to offer comment by telephone in advance. Before commenting, each speaker must state their name and group affiliation, if applicable.

All individuals or groups shall be limited to one (1) presentation on a given topic. Each speaker shall be limited to one (1) three (3) minute comment. When there are multiple speakers on the same issue, the presiding officer may indicate the Board's desire that the speakers designate two (2) people to speak for the group.

When the material to be presented is lengthy, speakers are encouraged to provide written comments in support of their spoken commentary for distribution to Board members for study and review. The presiding officer may announce a specific time limit for speakers' comments.

All statements shall be directed to the presiding officer; no participant may address or question Board members individually.

Comment on Agenda Items

The first period for comment shall occur before any agenda items are deliberated or any official action is taken. This comment period shall be limited to those items listed on the meeting agenda for official action or deliberation. If, pursuant to law, a matter is raised on which official action is to be taken, the presiding officer shall call for and allow public comment on such item.

Comment on Other Matters of Concern

A second period for comment on other matters of concern shall be allowed before adjournment. This comment period shall be limited to matters of concern within the authority of the School Board.

Use of Electronic Devices

Electronic recording devices and cameras, in addition to those used as official recording devices, shall be permitted at public meetings under the following guidelines established by the Board.[\[6\]](#)

1. Electronic recording devices, other than those used as official recording devices, mobile phones, cameras, and video cameras, will be permitted at meetings subject to prior knowledge of the Board. Anyone intending to use a recording device should contact either the Coordinator of Communications or the Board Secretary prior to the meeting so that accommodations, as necessary, may be made.
2. Electronic devices may not be used in a manner that will interrupt or intimidate any speaker during a School Board meeting. When recording a segment of the School Board meeting, users may not step beyond the third row from the front of the audience section of the Boardroom at any time.
3. Reporters/Technicians may not disrupt any School Board meeting. The use of an electronic recording device should not disrupt the orderly transaction of business or the decorum of the meeting.

Placards and Banners

No placards or banners will be permitted within the meeting room.

Failure to comply with these guidelines could result in the presiding officer recessing or adjourning the meeting or taking other action to re-establish order or decorum.

Legal

1. 65 Pa. C.S.A. 710
 2. 65 Pa. C.S.A. 710.1
 3. 65 Pa. C.S.A. 712.1
 4. 24 P.S. 407
 5. Pol. 006
 6. 65 Pa. C.S.A. 711
- 65 Pa. C.S.A. 701 et seq
Pol. 906