



# Williamson Central School

The Board of Education conducts the business of the school district during regular board meetings. These meetings are considered to be “meetings” of a “public body” under the New York State Open Meetings Law, however, there are limitations on the participation of members of the public at these meetings. Pursuant to Board policy, the Board of Education offers the opportunity for citizens/community members to speak at the end of every regular board meeting. The items listed on the agenda are items that need the board's attention and action. Therefore, comments during this time are limited to topics that are on the agenda and comments are limited to two minutes per agenda item. The board welcomes public comment, however there are certain rules in place to protect the privacy of students and employees and to ensure that the Board meeting runs smoothly. The board listens to public comments during the appointed time, but will not respond at that time. The board and the district follow up at a later date as necessary regarding public comment questions or feedback.

1. **What is a public meeting?** The New York State Open Meetings Law defines a “meeting” as the “official convening of a public body for the purpose of conducting public business., including the use of videoconferencing for attendance and participation by the members of the public body” (Public Officers Law § 102). Although the Board sets aside a portion of its regular meetings for public comment, the general purpose of such meetings is to conduct Board of Education business. From time to time, the Board of Education may also host public hearings where citizens are encouraged to ask questions and provide feedback on specific topics.
2. **Do you need to fill out a form to speak during public comment time at a BOE meeting?** No. You do not need to fill out any form in order to speak during the public comment time at a meeting. We ask that prospective speakers sign in and indicate the topic upon which they wish to speak prior to the start of the meeting. Pursuant to Board policy, comments are limited to items that are on the agenda. Each speaker has two minutes for public comment and the total time allotted for public comment is 10 minutes.
3. **Why is public comment limited to agenda items?** The purpose of regular Board of Education meetings is to conduct business on the topics noted on the agenda. In the event that a community member has concerns on topics that are not on the existing agenda, the District has policies and procedures in place to address such concerns outside of the regular Board meeting.
4. **How do I get an item on the agenda?** If a community member wishes to have a topic considered as part of the Board’s agenda, that individual may submit the Citizen Input Request Form located on our website under the Board of Education tab. Once the form is submitted, the submitter is invited to meet with the Superintendent and the BOE President to discuss whether the topic needs to be an additional agenda item on a future

agenda or if there might be a more efficient and timely way to address the issue at hand. Typically, items on a board agenda are matters of board business. The board is willing to consider topics if they align with the work of the district and need action. However, the Board of Education has full discretion over whether any proposed items are added to a future agenda.

5. **When I reach out to the Board of Education with issues related to my child or the district, why do they often refer me to my child's building or the superintendent?** Questions and concerns regarding individual students and other matters of day-to-day District operations are often best addressed by the District staff or administrators at the building level. The District has in place a "chain of command" in order to most effectively and efficiently address such concerns. However, if issues persist and rise up through the chain of command, the Board of Education is often the final rule on findings and appeals. They must remain impartial until and if they are called to fulfill that duty. Also, often, it is not within the Board's duties and authority to handle certain issues. The Superintendent of Schools or building administrators are often the authorities who can make decisions or changes, again, with the board serving as the final appeal process.
6. **Is Public Comment the only way I can get my opinion to the BOE?** There are several additional avenues to provide feedback to the Board. You can send emails, call board members, reach out and/or schedule a meeting with a board member. The Board of Education members' contact information is readily available on our website. Board members do not interact on social media as recommended in the Board Member Handbook, but they are available to answer questions, take feedback and talk through concerns.
7. **Why is the public comment section of the meeting not live streamed?** This measure was put in place to prevent the inadvertent disclosure of students or school employees or the sharing of offensive content.
8. **Why isn't the Public Comment a Q&A?** As the governing body of the School District, the Board of Education is may only act as a body; in other words, individual Board members do not have the authority to make unilateral decisions. Therefore, the Board takes all questions and comments under advisement at the meeting, but will not make a direct response at that time. This allows the Board time to collect appropriate information needed to give a thoughtful and accurate response to community members' questions. Also, there are many times the district is prohibited from answering due to regulatory or legal rules or privacy laws.