

## **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT BOARD (SCHOOL COMMITTEE) MEETINGS**

It is the policy of the Bristol Warren Regional School Committee to encourage a robust and open dialogue with students, parents, educators, and other members of the Bristol/Warren community. This policy is intended to set forth general rules to guide public input during School Committee meetings.

The Rhode Island Open Meetings Act (R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-46-1 et seq) recognizes a public body's ability to hold an optional Open Forum/Public Comment period of a meeting. An open forum is "the designated portion of an open meeting, if any, on a properly posted notice reserved for the citizens to address comments to a public body relating to matters affecting the public business." R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-46-2(f). Accordingly, the BWRSD School Committee may devote a portion of its meeting to a public comment period at the discretion of the Chair.

Public comment may take place at each business meeting of the School Committee. Said public forum shall not exceed a total of fifteen (15) minutes. During public comment the public may speak to any issue to which they may have concerns and which do not violate any other committee policy or state law. The school committee may respond and/or take the comments under advisement. In addition Public Comment may take place during each workshop/presentation.

The School Committee may provide an opportunity for any person to be heard on any subject relevant to and falling within the jurisdiction of the committee. The School Committee welcomes civil and respectful comments that are clear and concise with the purpose of informing its deliberations and mission. Public comment will be the first item on the agenda of regular workshop and business school committee meetings following the call to order and Pledge of Allegiance. In such instances, the school committee will adhere to the following protocols:

### **Rules of Conduct at School Committee Meetings:**

- Persons addressing the School Committee will be permitted three minutes for their presentation and a total of 15 minutes for the total comment period.
- Any member of the public who is allowed to speak before the school committee must complete the public participation form and state for the record their name and address. Additional citizen participation will be at the discretion of the chairperson.
- Current School Committee members who wish to speak during the public comment portion of the meeting as a member of the public must complete the public participation form prior to the start of the meeting, following the same process as members of the public and must do so from the designated podium.

- If a large number of individuals are present to comment on a single issue or concern, the Chairperson may, at their discretion, ask that one representative of each point of view, after identifying and acknowledging the group, present the concern of the group.
- Complaints concerning individual students, employees or School Committee members will not be subject to public comment. The Chairperson of the School Committee will stop any comments on individual students or employees. Concerns of this nature must be addressed through the School Committee policy KLD (Public Complaints About School Personnel). Complaints must be handled according to Policies and Regulations of the School Committee.
- Speakers should address the committee in a respectful manner and their comments should be concise and relevant to the matters being discussed, avoiding any off-topic remarks or personal attacks.
- Any person who continues to disrupt a school committee meeting after a clear warning may be ordered to leave the meeting by the Chairperson. If the person does not leave, authorities may be called.
- The Chairperson of the meeting will ensure compliance with this policy, and may intervene if the guidelines are not being followed.

The public should be aware that School Committee members are not permitted by law to engage in substantive discussion with members of the public about issues that have not been posted in advance of the meeting. In these instances, the School Committee members may ask for clarification or additional information in order to take the issue or issues presented under advisement.

Written testimony is appreciated and encouraged. Written testimony can be sent to the School Committee via the Superintendent's office by Thursday prior to any school committee meeting or given to the assistant to the School Committee during any relevant meeting.

The public is informed that Section 42-46-5 of the General Laws to Rhode Island (known as the Open Meeting laws) prevents school committees from adding additional items to their published agenda.

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LEGAL REF.: 42-46-5

CROSS REF.: BDDC, Agenda Preparation and Dissemination

BRISTOL WARREN REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT, BRISTOL, RHODE ISLAND