

Policy Manual

Section 1000 Community  
Title Public Participation in Board Meetings  
Code 1001.1  
Status Active  
Adopted June 27, 1990  
Last Revised ~~September 26, 2012~~

**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.<sup>[1]</sup>

**Authority**

In order to permit fair and orderly expression of such public comment, the Board will provide a period for public participation and will formulate rules to govern such public participation in Board meetings.

**Delegation of Responsibility**

The presiding officer at each public Board meeting shall follow Board policy for the conduct of public meetings. Where his/her ruling is disputed, it may be overruled by a majority of those Board members present and voting.

**Guidelines**

In order to ensure the orderly conduct of public business, as well as freedom of access by the public to the Board, the following general guidelines shall apply:<sup>[2][3]</sup>

1. Regularly scheduled meetings of the Board, sitting as a deliberative public body, shall be strictly confined to the business at hand and without participation of the public other than as spectators, unless invited in advance to participate by the Board.  
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2. As is customary in the operation of governmental bodies, hearings and presentations by citizens or employees will be accommodated separately from regularly scheduled business meetings of the Board.

3. Demonstrations or demonstration devices, including but is not limited to signs, posters, banners, placards, carpet squares or any similar item, will not be permitted at Board or committee meetings or hearings, nor will such demonstrations or demonstration devices be permitted within the buildings of the School District.

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Commented [JP1]: Can we provide some examples of what these devices is are so it is clear for the public?

Commented [ES2R1]: I am actually not sure what they are. This is in the current policy. Maybe signs, placards, posters etc? I can add that in and any other ideas the committee has.

4. In addition to hearings before committees of the Board, the Board shall periodically conduct open hearings at which the public may make brief presentations on questions of general educational concern. Such meetings shall be publicized in advance and their agenda shall first include persons who request in advance in writing to be heard.

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The Board welcomes communications from the general public; upon request, the Board will arrange at convenient times for appearances before the Board, sitting as a committee of the whole or represented by appropriate subcommittees, the meetings to be public or private as may be suited to the subject at hand.

The Board also welcomes communications from employees relative to improving the educational process and to matters of employment. While the normal channel of communication is through the Office of the Superintendent and Board Secretary for prompt staff and employee committee consideration and recommendation, the Board may schedule individual testimony at public hearings, sitting as a committee of the whole or represented by appropriate subcommittees.

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~~A public hearing is held each month (from July through June) at which individuals or spokespersons may give testimony regarding items on the agenda for action by the Board or for matters about which they have an interest or concern.~~

Commented [ES4]: Changed to "upcoming agenda" to be clear it is for the next agenda. Revise per the Committee's recommendation.

~~3. Demonstrations or demonstration devices will not be permitted at Board or committee meetings or hearings, nor will such demonstrations or demonstration devices be permitted within the buildings of the School District.~~

~~4.3. In addition to hearings before committees of the Board, the Board shall periodically conduct open hearings at which the public may make brief presentations on questions of general educational concern. Such meetings shall be publicized in advance and their agenda shall first include persons who request in advance in writing to be heard.~~

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 Hearings

A public hearing is held each month (from July through June) at which individuals or spokespersons may give testimony regarding upcoming agenda items for Board action, or for matters about which they have a concern.

#### Requirements for Participation in Public Hearing Meetings:

1. The Board requires that public participants be residents or taxpayers of this district or:

1. a. Anyone having registered a legitimate interest in a contemplated action of the Board.

2. b. Anyone representing a group in the community or School District.

3. c. Any representative of a firm eligible to bid on materials or services solicited by the Board.

4. d. Any District employee.

5. e. Any District student.

2. All individuals wishing to participate in a public Board meeting shall register their intent with the Board Secretary in advance of the meeting, and shall include the name and address of the participant, the topic to be addressed, and group affiliation, if applicable. The participant shall also indicate if they will testify "in person" or "virtually". Instructions to register shall be provided in the accompanying Administrative Regulation to this Policy.

**Commented [ES5]:** Created new sub section - Public Hearings

**Commented [ES6]:** Changed to "upcoming agenda" to be clear it is for the next agenda. Revise per the Committee's recommendation.

**Commented [JP7]:** Should we specify that this is on Zoom and/or the platform of the District's choosing?

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**Commented [ES8]:** Include timeline for registration in regulations

**Commented [JP9]:** Change this to "will" or "shall"

**Commented [JP10]:** I think that we should specify that if someone signs up to participate in person they cannot change their option. Same as if they choose virtual, they cannot choose to show up in person.

This will allow the moderator to call upon the correct people in the correct order.

**Commented [ES11R10]:** I am going to put this in paragraph 6 where it talks about choosing in person or virtual.

3. Participants must be recognized by the presiding officer and must preface their comments by an announcement of their name, ~~address,~~ and group affiliation if applicable.

4. No participant may speak more than once, ~~on the same topic.~~

5. All participants will be limited to three (3) minutes of testimony, and no participant is allowed to relinquish any remaining time to another speaker.

6. Participants may choose to speak “in person” at the meeting, or “virtually”, via ~~Z~~zoom, ~~teams~~ or any other online program that the District chooses to use. Instructions for how to participate virtually will be available on the District’s website, and registration information will be available in the accompanying Administrative Regulation. Participants may not change their method of testimony after registration.

7. Participants may also submit written testimony to the Board for consideration, in addition to their oral testimony or as their entire testimony.

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

9. Order of Speakers:

a. The Board Secretary shall determine the order of speakers.

a. All persons speaking **in person** shall give their testimony first. Within ~~this~~ group, the participants shall speak in the following order:

i. Those who requested to address a topic stated the next Legislative agenda

ii. Those who requested to address a topic *NOT* stated on the Legislative agenda

iii. Those who did not list a topic in their request to speak.

b. All persons speaking **virtually** shall give their testimony after the in-person testimony is complete. Within ~~this~~ group, the participants shall speak in the following order:

i. Those who requested to address a topic stated the next Legislative agenda

ii. Those who requested to address a topic *NOT* stated on the Legislative agenda

iii. Those who did not list a topic in their request to speak.

Commented [JP12]: This is clear, but I think it should just say “no one may speak more than once”

Commented [JP13]: This needs to be enforced

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Commented [JP14]: This needs to be enforced

Commented [ES15]: This is one suggestion. Could also do agenda items first in total (in person , then virtual) and then non agenda speakers (in person, then virtual). Anyone who does not list topic goes at end of the line.

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Commented [ES16]: This is one suggestion. Could also do agenda items first in total (in person , then virtual) and then non agenda speakers (in person, then virtual). Anyone who does not list topic goes at end of the line.

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Commented [JP17]: Where will they identify what they are speaking on/who determines what item they are speaking on?

Commented [ES18R17]: When they register they have to list the topic and/or submit their written testimony. (paragraph 2)

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10. The Board recognizes that all speakers, regardless of their viewpoint(s), are entitled to the courtesy of speaking without interruption, either through expressions of support or disagreement. The Board also recognizes that this is a public meeting, and any conduct that clearly violates the law or board policy shall not be permitted. Participants are required to refrain from obscene or threatening language toward members of the Board or the public, and to also refrain from interrupting any speaker by way of cheers, boos, clapping of hands or any other audible means of communication.

a. The presiding officer may:

~~i. Interrupt or terminate a participant's statement when the statement is too lengthy, personally directed, abusive, obscene, or irrelevant.~~

~~1. i. Interrupt or terminate a speaker when circumstances warrant, such as when a speaker goes beyond the District's time limit, attempts to speak on issues outside of the time frame set by Paragraph 8 of this policy, engages in conduct that is in violation of board policy or is interfering with the orderly progress of the meeting.~~

~~2. ii. Request any individual to leave the meeting when that person does not observe reasonable decorum.~~

~~3. iii. 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. iv. Call a recess or adjourn to another time when the lack of public decorum interferes with the orderly conduct of the meeting.~~

11. Electronic recording devices and cameras, in addition to those used as official recording devices, shall be permitted at public meetings under guidelines which may be established by the Board.

12. No placards or banners will be permitted within the meeting room or building. This includes but is not limited to signs, posters, banners, placards, carpet squares or any other item used for demonstration purposes.

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Commented [ES19]: This is recommended to be removed as there is case law that addressed this, and found that the terms were overly broad, vague and could be considered viewpoint discrimination. I added a sentence in paragraph 9 prohibiting obscene or threatening language.

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Commented [ES20]: This is an attempt to allow Mr. Walker to suspend or terminate a speaker when they claim they will talk about agenda item but bring up different topic. The idea would be to send them to the back of the line, if the Board want to do so.

Commented [JP21]: Is it school security or school police? Or does this mean to call outside police? I think it should specify if possible

Commented [ES22R21]: This is a board decision. This provision is from the old policy, but I think it is good to keep in case of a serious incident. I am not sure how the school police work (would they be available) or if you should leave it as is so you have option of PPS or PGH Police.

Commented [JP23]: Would this count as a "demonstration item"?

Commented [ES24R23]: No, this is separate. It is PA law that the meeting can be recorded by individuals. The demonstration items would be more like posters I think.

Commented [JP25]: Can we include props/posters etc. We have had people bring carpet squares, printed pasteboard etc.

Commented [ES26R25]: Yes, this is similar to the demonstration devices. Do you think I should have it in both places or combine the two paragraph?

13. The meeting agenda and all pertinent documents shall be available to the press and public at the meetings.

14. The meetings shall be recorded, and the recordings will be made available to the public within a reasonable timeframe after the conclusion of the public hearing.

#### Legal

[1. 65 Pa. C.S.A. 701 et seq](#)

[2. 65 Pa. C.S.A. 710](#)

[3. 65 Pa. C.S.A. 710.1](#)

[1001.1-AR-1 of 1\\_Procedures for Testifying at Public Hearings.pdf \(82 KB\)](#)

**Last Modified by ~~Heather Masshardt~~Elizabeth Sattler on January ~~21 10, 2017~~2025**