

PUBLIC COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

Public comment about Bluffton-Harrison Metropolitan School District (“BHMSD” or the “Corporation”) is welcomed by the School Board whenever it is motivated by a sincere desire to improve the quality of the educational program. Any person or group having an interest in the operation of the Corporation shall have the right to present a request, suggestion, comment, or concern relating to personnel, the programs, or the operations of the Corporation.

Comments and concerns related to curriculum, methods of instruction, instructional materials, or Corporation employees shall be submitted in writing to the principal of the school and the Superintendent. Comments and concerns thus submitted will be considered by the Superintendent or his or her designated assistants and the principal. At the discretion of the Superintendent, a committee may be appointed, an existing committee may be utilized, or other action may be taken to review the matter in question and submit a written decision to the Superintendent.

Subject to the reasonable rules and registration process described below, the Board shall allow members of the public, physically present at a meeting, to provide oral comment before the Board takes final action on a topic. The Board may choose to allow public comment during an electronic meeting held during a declared emergency or local disaster.

- a. To allow for an efficient meeting, the total amount of time dedicated to public comment shall not exceed thirty (30) minutes. The Board may increase the time allotted for public comment in order to meet obligations under law.
- b. The Board shall allot each person providing public comment two (2) minutes to speak.
- c. Persons wishing to address the Board on an agenda item [or other topics germane to Board business] shall register twenty-four (24) hours ahead of the scheduled meeting time by completing the appropriate form. The registration form will include the name of the person(s) providing comment, the organization represented (if any), and identify the agenda item to be addressed.
- d. No person may speak more than once on the same topic.
- e. In order to receive public comment on all agenda items scheduled for final action, the Board will take speakers on a first-come, first-served basis according to the date and time of registration. If the overall time allotment does not allow for accommodation of all speakers, comment will rotate through agenda items to assure the Board hears comment on all agenda items. For example, the Board would hear comment from the first person to register to speak regarding agenda item 1, then the first person to register to speak regarding agenda item 2, and so on and so forth for each agenda item scheduled for final action at the meeting. The Board would then repeat that process, moving to the second, third, fourth, etc., person registered to speak on each agenda item until all registered speakers have spoken or the thirty (30) minute time limit expires, whichever occurs first.

The purpose of public comment is to give the Board members as much information as possible, not to engage in debate. Board members or administrators may provide answers to questions

asked during public comment if the information is readily available and not confidential. Often, however, questions will not be answered, but taken under advisement and answers may be returned at a later time.

Any person or group wishing to comment on an item that is not on the agenda shall register their intent with the Superintendent no later than seven (7) days prior to the meeting and include:

- A. Name of the person who wishes to speak;
- B. Group affiliation, if and when appropriate;
- C. Topic to be addressed;
- D. A written statement or outline that contains the purpose and major points of the presentation prior to the start of the meeting. Items so submitted shall become a part of the official meeting records. Copies may be reproduced by the Corporation and dispersed to the Board members.

Such requests shall be reviewed by both the Superintendent and the Board President. This comment period shall occur at the end of the meeting and shall be limited to a total of 10 minutes with a maximum of 2 minutes per speaker. If more people desire to participate than is feasible in the time available, the Board shall utilize the same procedure used to establish priority for comments on agenda topics (see provision e above).

The Board will not tolerate comments that are: threatening, illegal, obscene, defamatory, or on a topic outside of the agenda. Comments should be directed to the Board, not an individual Board member. The presiding officer may:

1. interrupt, warn or terminate a person's statement when the statement is too lengthy, personally directed, abusive, obscene, or irrelevant;
2. request any individual to leave the meeting when that person behaves in a manner that is disruptive of the orderly conduct of the meeting;
3. request the assistance of law enforcement officers in the removal of a disorderly person when that person's behavior interferes with the orderly conduct of the meeting.
4. call for a recess or an adjournment to another time when the lack of public decorum so interferes with the orderly conduct of the meeting as to warrant such action;
5. waive these rules with the approval of the Board when necessary for the protection of privacy or the administration of the Board's business.

Nothing in this policy prohibits the Board from taking reasonable steps to maintain order in a meeting, including removal of any person who is willfully disruptive of the meeting.

I.C. 20-26-5-4
20 U.S.C. 1232h

Bluffton-Harrison Metropolitan School District

Adopted: April 15, 2024

Revised: April 21, 2025