

PUBLIC COMMENT AT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETINGS

All regular and special meetings of the School Committee shall be open to the public. Executive sessions will be held only as prescribed by the Statutes of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

The School Committee desires individuals to attend its meetings so that they may become better acquainted with the operations and the programs of our local public schools. In addition, the Committee would like the opportunity to hear public comment.

All Speakers are encouraged to present their remarks in a respectful manner.

NOTE: the following procedures are consistent with Section 9-18 of the Fall River City Charter regarding Public Comment Rules or Policy as they pertain to public bodies such as the school committee.

The Charter states: "The School Committee shall develop and adopt rules or policy addressing public comment. The rules or policies shall require that public meeting comment periods appear on meeting agendas for all regular and special meetings. Public comment shall not be limited to items on the agenda for any regular meeting, providing the issues or concerns raised are within the jurisdiction of the school committee. Public comment at any special meeting shall be limited to items on the meeting agenda.

To ensure the ability of the School Committee to conduct the District's business in an orderly manner, the following rules and procedures are adopted:

1. At the start of each regularly scheduled School Committee meeting, individuals will sign in for an opportunity to speak during public comment. The public comment segment shall not exceed 30 minutes and any additional public comment shall be heard at the end of the meeting. All speakers are encouraged to present their remarks in a respectful manner
2. Speakers will be allowed up to three (3) minutes to present their material and must begin their comments by stating their name and city/town. The presiding Chair may permit extension of this time limit, in extenuating circumstances. Large groups addressing the same topic are encouraged to consolidate their remarks and/or select a spokesperson to comment at Citizens' Input. Speakers may not assign their time to another speaker.
3. Topics for discussion should be limited to those items within the School Committee's scope of authority. The authority of the School Committee primarily concerns the review and approval of the budget of the district's public schools, the performance of the Superintendent, and the educational goals and policies of the district's public schools. Comments and complaints regarding school personnel (apart from the Superintendent) or students are generally prohibited unless those comments and complaints concern matters within the scope of School Committee authority.

- a. Fall River City Charter

Section 9-18: Public Comment Rules or Policy

The City Council, the school committee, and all multiple-member bodies shall develop and adopt rules or a policy addressing public comment. The rule or policy shall require that public comment periods appear on meeting agendas for all regular and special meetings. Public comment shall not be limited to items on the agenda for any regular meeting, provided the issues or concerns raised are within the jurisdiction of the city council, school committee, or any multiple-member body, respectively; public comment at any special meeting shall be limited to items on the agenda.

4. The Chair of the meeting, after a warning, reserves the right to terminate speech which is not constitutionally protected because it constitutes true threats that are likely to provoke a violent reaction and cause a breach of the peace, or incitement to imminent lawless conduct.
5. Written comments longer than three (3) minutes may be presented to the presiding Chair before or after the meeting. Written comments longer than three (3) minutes be adopted and placed on file. The first three (3) minutes of any Public Comment shall be read. All remarks will be addressed through the Chair of the meeting. Comments made during the Citizen's Input portion of the meeting do not necessarily reflect the views or positions of the Fall River School Committee.
6. Sign up instructions will be provided for those who wish to participate in Citizens' Input.
7. Disclaimer: Citizens' Input is not a time for debate or response to comments by the School Committee. Comments made at Citizens' Input may not reflect the views or the positions of the School Committee. Because of constitutional free speech principles, the School Committee does not have the authority to prevent all speech that may be upsetting and/or offensive at Citizens' Input.

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. 30A: 18-25

CROSS REFS: BE, SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETINGS
BEC, EXECUTIVE SESSIONS
BEDA, NOTIFICATION OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETINGS

SOURCE: MASC – Updated 2023