

PUBLIC COMMENT AT SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS

The primary purpose of School Board meetings is to conduct the business of the Board related to Board policies, programs, and operations. The Board encourages the public to attend Board meetings so that they may become acquainted with the operations and programs of the schools. The Board will provide appropriate opportunities at its meetings for members of the public to express opinions and concerns related to the matters concerning education and the Scarborough Public Schools during a general public comment period or for specific agenda items. The intent is to allow a fair and adequate opportunity for the public to be heard while ensuring that the time allowed for public discussion does not interfere with the fulfillment of the scheduled agenda. This policy applies only to meetings of the full Board, not to meetings of Board subcommittees. To permit fair and orderly expression of public comments at Board business meetings while still allowing the Board to conduct its business efficiently, the Board has established the procedure below for regular business meetings.

Each Individual is limited to a maximum of three (3) minutes per comment period at a meeting. Individuals may not relinquish a portion of their allotted time to another speaker. The time limits in this paragraph may be modified at a particular meeting at the discretion of the Board.

1. The Board Chair is responsible for ensuring the orderly conduct of Board meetings and for ensuring compliance with this policy. Members of the public may address the board according to the following rules of order:
 - a. Speakers will be recognized by the Board Chair, and comments should be addressed to the Board Chair. Public comment will not include dialogue with Board members. Requests for information or concerns that require further research may be referred to the Superintendent for further action, if necessary;
 - b. Individuals shall stand behind the podium during their allotted time for comment. Speakers will not be permitted to approach the Board or walk or stand elsewhere around the room during their comment period. Speakers must be recognized by the Board Chair, and all public comments should be addressed to the Board Chair.
 - c. Speakers are expected to follow rules of common etiquette and decorum for the forum – a school business meeting at which students may be present – and are required to refrain from (i) using indecent and/or obscene language, (ii) engaging in disruptive conduct, including but not limited to inciting criminal conduct, shouting, threatening others using words or by other actions, making defamatory comments, exceeding the allotted time limits, talking over or interrupting others, offering repetitive comments, and offering comments on matters unrelated to school or education matters. For purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply:

Indecent – the remark is uttered before 10:00 p.m. and describes or depicts sexual or excretory activities or organs in a patently offensive manner as measured by contemporary community standards.

Obscene – the remark appeals to the prurient (i.e., shameful, morbid, or unwholesome fascination with sex, nudity, or excretory functions) interest; depicts or describes sexual conduct in a patently offensive way; and, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political or scientific value.

- d. Discussion of personnel matters is not permitted during the public comment period due to the privacy, confidentiality and due process rights of Scarborough Public Schools' employees. For purposes of this policy, "discussion of a personnel matter" means any discussion of job performance or conduct of a Scarborough Public Schools' employee, including complaints or positive/complimentary comments about them.
- e. Discussion of matters involving individual students are also not permitted during the public comment period due to the privacy, confidentiality, and due process rights of Scarborough Public Schools' students.
- f. Any concerns about personnel matters and/or student matters should be directed to the Superintendent or another appropriate administrator outside of Board meetings so that they can be addressed through an alternative channel and in a manner consistent with privacy, confidentiality, and due process rights of the individuals involved.
- g. The Board Chair will intervene in any public comment that is contrary to these rules.
- h. Individuals who disrupt a Board meeting may be asked to leave in order to allow the Board to conduct its business in an orderly manner. The Board Chair may request the assistance of law enforcement if necessary to address disruptions or safety concerns.

Opportunity for public comment at Board committee meetings is not required but may be permitted at the discretion of the committee chair and will meet the expectations of this policy

Legal Reference: 20-A MRSA § 1001(20)
20-A MRSA § 6101
1 MRSA § 405

Cross Reference: BE – School Board Meetings
BEDB – Agenda
BEDB-R – Agenda Format
BEC – Executive Sessions
KE – Public Concerns and Complaints

Revised: November 20, 2017
April 28, 2022
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