

RSU #63

- a. NEPN/NSBA Code: **BEDH**
- b. Title: **Public Participation at Meetings**
- c. Author:
- d. Replaces Policy: **Adopted MSMA BEDH**
- e. Date Approved: **08/24/2026**
- f. Previously Approved: **01/25/2021 RSU #63**
01/27/2014
- g. Policy Expiration: **Review as Needed**
- h. Responsible for Review: **Superintendent/Board of Directors/Policy Committee**
- i. Date Reviewed:
08/05/2026 Policy Committee
12/28/2020 Superintendent
01/13/2021 Policy Committee
- j. References: **1 MRSA par. 401 et. Seq.**
- k. Narrative:

The primary purpose of School Board meetings is to conduct the business of the Board related to school policies, programs, and operations. The Board encourages residents to attend Board meetings so that they may become acquainted with the operations and programs of the schools and cordially invites any interested member of the public to attend and participate as provided in this policy. The Board recognizes the value of public comments on school and educational matters. 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. At special, emergency, or workshop meetings, public comments will be limited to the topic(s) of the particular meeting.

Although Board meetings are not public forums, 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 RSU #63 schools. 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.

Regular, special, and emergency meetings of the Board are open to the public. The Board, as the elected representative body of RSU #63 (the District) wishes to provide an opportunity for citizens to raise questions, and to express interests and/or concerns related to their district. The Boards cordially invites the public to attend and participate in the Board meetings as set forth in this policy.

- I. The Board includes a public comment period, not to exceed 30 minutes on the agenda of its regular business meetings. Individual speakers will be given equal amounts of time to speak during public comment period, limited to a maximum of three (3) per speaker. 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 Chair. public review during normal business hours at the Superintendent's office. RSU #63 Minutes are also posted on the district website.

The Board will hear public comments from residents of the school unit first. If there is time remaining in the public comment period once all residents have had the opportunity to speak, the Board will permit comments from non-residents. Individuals who wish to speak are required to fill out the sign-in form available at each Board meeting, prior to the beginning of the public comment period, and review a copy of this policy. Each individual will be required to state their name and town/city of residence before beginning their remarks.

In order to make efficient use of meeting time, the Board requests that groups organizations be represented by designated spokespersons.

There will be a need to consider reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities who are not able to stand

- II.** 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.

The Board Chair is responsible for ensuring the orderly conduct of Board meetings and for ensuring compliance with this policy, including the following rules of order:

[In a limited public forum, school boards can enforce reasonable time, place, and manner restrictions, but they cannot, as a general rule, censor speech based on the speaker's viewpoint, even if that speech is unpopular. The following rules are crafted to align with these requirements. School units can consider adjustments to particular rules but should review such adjustments with their counsel prior to adoption]

- A.** 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 pm 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.

- B.** Discussion of personnel matters is not permitted during the public comment period due to the privacy, confidentiality and due process rights of school unit employees.

For purposes of this policy, “discussion of a personnel matter” means any discussion, whether positive or negative, of the job performance or conduct of a school unit employee (whether the employee is named directly or, in the judgment of the Board Chair, the identity of the employee can be reasonably identified due to the content of the remarks).

- C. 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 the school unit’s students.
- D. All 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.
- E. The Board Chair will stop any public comment that is contrary to these rules.
- F. 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.

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

PLEASE NOTE *MSMA sample policies and other resource materials do not necessarily reflect official Association policy. They are not intended for verbatim replication. Sample policies should be used as a starting point for a board’s policy development on specific topics. Rarely does one board’s policy serve exactly to address the concerns and needs of all other school units. MSMA recommends a careful analysis of the need and purpose of any policy and a thorough consideration of the application and suitability to the individual school system.*
MSMA sample policies and other resource materials may not be considered as legal advice and are not intended as a substitute for the advice of a board’s own legal counsel