

File: BEDH-E - GUIDELINES FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

A School Committee Meeting is a meeting of a government body at which members of the body deliberate over public business. We welcome the attendance of members of the school district community to view your School Committee as it conducts its regular business meeting.

Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 30A Section 20(f) governs public participation at open meetings covering all public bodies.

Chapter 30A:20 [Notice, Remote Participation, Public Participation, Certification]

(f) No person shall address a meeting of a public body without permission of the chair, and all persons shall, at the request of the chair, be silent. No person shall disrupt the proceedings of a meeting of a public body. If, after clear warning from the chair, a person continues to disrupt the proceedings, the chair may order the person to withdraw from the meeting and if the person does not withdraw, the chair may authorize a constable or other officer to remove the person from the meeting.

The School Committee believes that the school district community should have an opportunity to comment to the Committee on issues that affect the school district and are within the scope of the Committee's responsibilities. Therefore the Committee has set aside a period of time at each School Committee meeting to hear from the public. In addition, if the Committee believes that an issue requires a dialogue with the school district community, the Committee may schedule a separate public hearing on that issue.

Any person who wishes to make a presentation to the School Committee on an item which is of interest to him/her and within the scope of the Committee's responsibilities may request to be placed on the agenda for a particular meeting. Such request should be in writing and should be received by the Superintendent of Schools at least one week prior to the date of the meeting. Such request should contain background statements which would explain the scope and intent of the agenda item. The Chair of the Committee works with the Superintendent to formulate the meeting agendas. Together they will determine whether or not to place an item on the agenda and if the item is to be taken up, they will also determine when to place an item on the agenda and all parameters to be required of the presenter.

Here are the general rules for the Committee's public comment period:

1. Members of the public who wish to address the Committee during Public Comment are advised to register to speak by 3:00 p.m. on the day of the meeting by telephone or by email, directed to the Administrative Secretary of the School Committee.

The list of persons registered to speak, ordered by the date and time of the request, shall be presented to the Chair at the beginning of the meeting.

Additionally, there will be sign-up available prior to the in-person meeting. If the registered speakers do not consume the 30 minutes of time allocated for Public Comment, the Chair may recognize persons in attendance who request an opportunity to speak.

2. Public Comment shall generally follow the opening of the meeting. The Committee reserves the right to rearrange its agenda to accommodate scheduled presenters. The Chair shall call upon persons who have requested an opportunity to speak. Based on the meeting format, speakers may participate remotely or in person. If the number of people who sign up exceeds those who can reasonably speak in 30 minutes, speaking time may be reduced, or the number of speakers may be capped, at the discretion of the Chair.

Persons unable to speak, due to time constraints, will be invited to speak at the next regular meeting of the School Committee.

3. Any person wishing to speak before the Committee shall identify themselves by name and address and will be allowed up to three (3) minutes to present their material. The Chairperson may reduce speaking time if needed and/or may permit extension of this time limit. No person may speak more than once without permission of the Chair. All persons shall speak to the full Committee through the Chair and shall not address individual members or administrators.

4. Individuals may address topics on the agenda, items specified for public comment, or items within the scope of responsibility of the School Committee. The Chair shall rule out of order any individual who fails to honor the guidelines or who addresses a matter inappropriate for public comment.

5. Any Committee member may direct questions to the speaker through the Chair in order to clarify comments of the speaker.

Arlington Public Schools

Amended by the Arlington School Committee: December 15, 2022