

## **File: BEDH - 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 residents and non-resident students and their families of the town 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 the wishes and ideas of the public.

In order to provide for full and open communication between the public (students, teachers, administrators and members of the community) and the Arlington School Committee, the Committee authorizes several avenues for the exchange of information, ideas, and opinions. All of the following operate within the framework of the Committee's scheduled meetings.

1. Written correspondence may be directed to the Committee through its administrative secretary, to be disseminated to all members. Statements of two pages or less are encouraged.
2. During the public comment segment of regular meetings of the Committee, individuals or group representatives may address the Committee on items of school business. The length of the public participation segment shall normally be no more than 20 minutes, but may be extended by the Chairperson.
3. Speakers must 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.
4. Although a public body may hear an unanticipated topic through public comment that was not listed in the meeting notice, the Attorney General strongly encourages public bodies to postpone discussion and action on topics that are controversial or may be of particular interest to the public if those topics were not listed in the meeting notice. Committee members may ask clarifying questions through the chair, but discussion or action should be facilitated by using a motion to refer a topic to the appropriate subcommittee, or requesting a topic to be placed on a subsequent agenda.
5. Improper conduct and remarks, including use of obscenity or abusive language will not be allowed. Defamatory or abusive remarks are always out of order. If a speaker persists in improper conduct or remarks, the Chairperson may terminate that individual's privilege of address.
6. All remarks will be addressed through the Chairperson of the meeting.

7. Speakers may offer such objective criticisms of the school operations and programs as concern them, but in public session the Committee will not hear personal complaints about school personnel nor against any member of the school community, except for the School Committee or the Superintendent in their capacity as the operational leader of Arlington Public Schools. Under most circumstances, administrative channels are the proper means for disposition of legitimate complaints involving staff members. The public is reminded that the School Committee does not hold jurisdiction over the performance of school personnel other than the Superintendent.

8. Written comments longer than three (3) minutes may be presented to the Committee before or after the meeting for the Committee members' review and consideration at an appropriate time. Written comments presented to the Committee shall be included in the official record of the meeting.

9. Public Comment is not synonymous with a right to present audio-visual presentations before the Committee. Persons wishing to present audio-visual materials, as part of their public comment, shall contact the administrative secretary with sufficient advance notice to accommodate such requests, subject to the discretion of the Chairperson.

Revised and adopted by the Arlington School Committee 09 24 2020.