

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION 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 members of the Hull Public Schools school community to attend its meetings so that they may become better acquainted with the operations and the programs of the Hull Public Schools. In addition, the Committee would like the opportunity to hear the wishes and ideas of members of the Hull Public Schools school community on matters within the scope of their authority. These matters include the budget for the Hull Public Schools, the performance of the Superintendent, and the educational goals and policies of the Hull Public Schools.

In order that all who wish to be heard before the Committee have a chance, and to ensure the ability of the Committee to conduct the District's business in an orderly manner, the following rules and procedures are adopted consistent with state and federal free speech and assembly laws:

1. At the start of each regularly scheduled School Committee meeting, individuals or group representatives who have signed up to speak will be invited to address the Committee during its 15-minute public comment period, which shall be known as Public Speak. Public Speak shall occur prior to the discussion of Agenda items unless the Chair determines that there is a good reason for rearranging the order at a public meeting that is unrelated to deterring participation in Public Speak.
2. All speakers must conduct themselves in a peaceable and orderly manner. In addition, they are encouraged, but not required, to present their remarks in a respectful manner.
3. Speakers must begin their remarks by stating their name, town or city of residence, and affiliation. All remarks will be addressed through the Chair of the meeting.
4. Public Speak may concern items that are not on the School Committee's agenda, but which are within the scope of the School Committee's authority. Therefore, any comments involving staff members or students must concern the educational goals, policies, or budget of the Hull Public Schools, or the performance of the Superintendent.
5. Assuming that five (5) or fewer speakers sign up to engage in Public Speak each speaker will be allowed three (3) minutes each to present their material. If six (6) or more speakers sign up, then each speaker will be allowed two (2) minutes each. No more than six (6) speakers will be accommodated at any individual meeting.
6. Speakers may not assign their time to another speaker, and in general, extensions of time will not be permitted. However, speakers who require reasonable accommodations on the basis of a speech-related disability or who require language

interpretation services may be allotted a total of five (5) minutes to present their material. Speakers must notify the School Committee by telephone or email at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting if they wish to request an extension of time for one of these reasons.

7. The Chair of the meeting will not interrupt speakers who have been recognized to speak, except that the Chair reserves the right to terminate speech which is not Constitutionally protected because it constitutes a true threat of violence or incites imminent lawless conduct by others. Verbal comments will also be curtailed once they exceed the time limits outlined in paragraphs 5 and 7 of this policy and/ or to the extent they exceed the scope of the School Committee's authority.
8. In order to allow a peaceable and orderly meeting, no person may offer comment without permission of the Chair, and all persons shall, at the request of the Chair, be silent.
9. Disclaimer: Public Speak is not a time for debate or response to comments by the School Committee. Comments made at Public Speak do 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 Public Speak.

Revised Date: June 29, 2023
March 26, 2019
October 6, 2015

REFERENCES: Barron v. Southborough, Natick Public Schools, ACLU letter to the Mass. Municipal Lawyers Assoc. and Mass. Assoc. of School Committees

LEGAL REFS: M.G.L. 30A:18-25, Open Meeting Law
940 CMR 29 Open Meeting Regulations

CROSS REF: BEC, Executive Sessions

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Hull Public Schools