

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT BOARD MEETINGS

Policy Code:

2310

Board meetings are conducted for the purpose of carrying on the official business of the school system. The public is cordially invited to attend board meetings to observe the board as it conducts its official business.

The board of education, as an elected representative body of the school system, also wishes to provide a forum for citizens to express interests and concerns related to the school system. In order that the board may conduct an orderly meeting while providing an opportunity for input, individuals or groups may be heard by the board in accordance with this policy or subsection D.2 of policy 2300, Board Meetings, which addresses public hearings.

A. REQUESTS TO PLACE ITEM ON THE AGENDA

In order that the board may fairly and adequately discharge its overall responsibility, citizens desiring an item to be placed on the agenda for a specific board meeting should direct written requests to the superintendent at least 15 calendar days prior to the meeting.

The request should include: (1) the name and address of the person or persons making the request; (2) the organization or group, if any, represented; and (3) a brief explanation of the nature of the item. Questions and/or materials to be presented to the board are to be submitted along with the request.

The superintendent shall confer with the chairperson of the board concerning whether to approve placing the requested item on the agenda and to determine the appropriate meeting for such discussion. The superintendent, with the consent of the board chairperson, shall accept or deny a request for inclusion on the agenda for any reason determined appropriate by the superintendent and chairperson.

The superintendent shall notify the requesting party of the response to the request. The superintendent shall explain any other processes available for addressing the concerns. (See section C, Reports of Complaints, below.) At the meeting, the board may, by majority vote and notwithstanding prior denial by the superintendent, add an item to the agenda before the agenda is adopted. After the agenda has been adopted, a two-thirds vote is required to add a new item to the agenda.

The chairperson shall establish the amount of time for individual or group presentations.

B. PUBLIC COMMENT

A part of each regular board meeting will be set aside for citizens to address the board through public comment. A time for public comment will not be provided at workshop sessions or retreats.

1. Requests to Speak

Any individual or spokesperson for any group who wishes to address the board must complete a request to address the board form prior to the commencement of the meeting and provide his or her name; address; the name of the organization he or she represents, if any; and the topic to be addressed. The public information officer or superintendent's administrative assistant shall provide this form to prospective speakers prior to the beginning of the meeting and shall be available to answer questions regarding procedures. If the speaker wishes to provide the board members written materials related to his or her remarks, 20 copies should be given to the superintendent's designee for distribution.

Individual speakers will have up to three minutes to speak before the board. Groups will be asked to select one or more spokespersons to speak on their behalf and will be given up to a total of five minutes for the group. The board chairperson may limit the number of speakers on a specific topic, depending on the number of speakers and topics listed.

2. Procedures for Speaking

The following rules must be followed by speakers appearing before the board.

- a. The speaker shall state his or her name and address.
- b. All remarks should be made to the board as a body and not to an individual board member.
- c. No speaker may make obscene, abusive, or slanderous remarks. Any board member may stop such comments.
- d. Remarks end when the speaker's allotted time expires.

The board chairperson will immediately terminate any comments that violate this policy.

3. Response to the Speaker

Board members will not respond to individuals who address the board except to request clarification of points made by the presenter. Public speaker comments may be: (1) accepted as opinion; (2) referred to an administrator for investigation to be reported back to the citizen and board to the extent permitted by law; (3) referred to the superintendent and chairperson for agenda planning; or (4) referred to a board committee. Except in cases of emergency, information received during presentations will not be acted upon at the time it is received. It will take a unanimous vote of the board members present to take action on a presentation considered to be of an unusual or emergency nature at the time it is presented.

4. Disruptive Behavior

No person is allowed to disrupt the speaker except for board members as provided by this policy.

Disruptions by any person or persons of a public meeting will be subject to action in accordance with G.S. 143-318.17.

C. REPORTS OF COMPLAINTS

Complaints about the performance of school personnel, implementation of board policy, the quality of the educational program, or school facilities should be submitted initially for a response to the school system official responsible for the program or facility or to the superintendent. The superintendent or designee shall make available this policy and other relevant grievance procedures to any individual or group submitting a complaint.

Legal References: G.S. 143-318.10 and -318.17; 115C-36, -51

Cross References: Student and Parent Grievance Procedure (policy 1740/4010), Responding to Complaints (policy 1742/5060), Role of Board Members in Handling Complaints (policy 2122), Board Meetings (policy 2300), Board Meeting Agenda (policy 2330)

Adopted: November 2, 2015