

Public Comment at School Committee Meetings Policy

It is the policy of the Barrington School Committee to encourage a robust and open dialogue with students, parents, educators, and other members of the public. This policy is intended to set forth general rules to guide public input during School Committee meetings. It is important to the Barrington School Committee to have input from members of our community. There are two opportunities for public comment during every regular School Committee meeting agenda. It is during the Public Comment segments of the meeting that members of the public are invited to address the School Committee.

Public Comment Guidelines

The Rhode Island Open Meetings Act (R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-46-1 *et seq*) recognizes a public body's ability to hold an optional Open Forum/Public Comment period of a meeting. An open forum is "the designated portion of an open meeting, if any, on a properly posted notice reserved for citizens to address comments to a public body relating to matters affecting the public business." (R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-46-2(f)). The Rhode Island Open Meetings Act stipulates that Public Comment at a School Committee meeting may occur during the public comment session and may be for informational purposes only. The School Committee, by law, may not engage in substantive discussions nor respond to comments initiated by a member of the public if the topic is not listed as an agenda item at the meeting. The School Committee may, however, refer the matter to the Superintendent and/or may consider the topic as a future agenda item. In the spirit of transparency, compliance with the Open Meetings Act, and efficient meeting management, the following guidelines are provided for reference:

- Members of the public may have up to three minutes to speak on an issue or issues that are or are not scheduled for discussion or action on the meeting agenda. The purpose of this public comment period is to enable members of the public to express their thoughts and concerns, and is for informational purposes only. The Chair, with the consent of the Committee, may extend the length of the public comment period on the School Committee agenda.
- The School Committee welcomes civil and respectful comments that are clear and concise with the purpose of informing its deliberations and mission.
- The School Committee will not respond to a concern until it has obtained the necessary information.
- Large groups of people addressing the same topic are encouraged to consolidate their remarks or select a spokesperson to provide testimony.

Participant Responsibilities

- Please approach the podium and microphone and identify yourself by stating your name and address.
- Please sign the document for public comment indicating your full name, address, and topic for discussion upon completion of your comments.
- You may have approximately three minutes to address the School Committee.
- Please be respectful of those individuals whose views may be different from your views.
- Questions or comments regarding individual personnel issues are not to be discussed in open session and/or during Public Comment.
- Any comments to the School Committee that breach the privacy or other rights of students, parents, or school district employees will be ruled out of order by the School Committee Chair.
- Comments which may result in an imminent threat or disrupt the orderly and fair progress of discussion will be ruled out of order by the School Committee Chair.

School Committee Responsibilities

- The School Committee Chair will be responsible for maintaining proper order and adhering to time limits.
- School Committee members pledge to listen respectfully to all public comments without interrupting or engaging in conversation or debate.

Legal Ref: [General Laws of Rhode Island, § 42-46-5](#)
[Barrington Town Charter](#)

Revised 11/03/2005

Amended 1/5/2017