



Public Comment at School Committee Meetings Policy

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to set forth general rules to guide public input during the two opportunities for public comment during Barrington Public Schools (BPS) regular School Committee business meetings, as well as opportunities for dialogue during workshops.

II. POLICY

Workshops

During such meetings, opportunities for active listening and engagement are included in the agenda. While the School Committee must adhere to the Open Meetings Act,¹ the BPS School Committee established workshops as mechanisms to allow for expanded two-way dialogue between the public and Administration/Staff.

Regular Business Meetings

The Rhode Island Open Meetings Act recognizes a public body's ability to hold an optional Open Forum/Public Comment period during a meeting for informational purposes only. The School Committee may not engage in substantive discussions with members of the public during the public comment period; however, they may ask clarifying questions. The Chair may respond to matters proposed by a member of the public and is responsible for directing Committee and Superintendent interactions at their discretion. Public comment is not a time to engage in a question and answer dialogue.

As the Superintendent has responsibility for the overall management and operations of the schools, feedback relative to the operational function of the District may be referred directly to the Superintendent for a response.

Legal Ref: General Laws of Rhode Island, [§ 42-46-1.2.5.6](#)

Revised 11/03/2005

Amended 1/5/2017

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Protocol for Public Discussion at Regular Business School Committee Meetings

In the spirit of transparency, compliance with the Open Meetings Act, and efficient meeting management, the following guidelines are provided for reference:

1. The School Committee Chair will introduce a Public Comment period.
 - Welcome and request for anyone who wishes to speak to sign the document for public comment indicating full name, address, and topic for discussion.
 - Speakers should approach the podium and microphone and identify themselves by stating their name and address.
 - Members of the public may have up to three minutes to speak on any issue(s).
 - Large groups of people addressing the same topic are encouraged to consolidate their remarks or select a spokesperson to provide remarks.
 - If the topic is not on the agenda, the School Committee may consider it as a future agenda item during the Discussion Items period of the meeting.
 - If the topic is on the agenda, the School Committee may discuss the speaker's comments during the meeting at the relevant time on the agenda.
 - The Chair may refer questions to the Superintendent and the administrative staff if the the topic contains an operational question.
2. The Chair, with the consent of the Committee, may limit the length of the public comment period in order to facilitate the business of the School Committee.
3. The School Committee welcomes civil and respectful comments that are clear and concise with the purpose of informing its deliberations and mission.
4. Participants are asked to:
 - A. Be respectful of those individuals with differing views.
 - B. Avoid questions or comments regarding individual personnel issues.
 - C. Avoid any comments to the School Committee that breach the privacy or other rights of students, parents, or school district employees. Such comments will be ruled out of order by the School Committee Chairperson.
 - D. Avoid any comments which may result in an imminent threat or disrupt the orderly and fair progress of the discussion. Such comments will be ruled out of order by the School Committee Chairperson.
5. The Chair will be responsible for maintaining proper order and preside over the Public Comment period.



6. The School Committee Vice-Chairperson will be responsible for adhering to time limits.
7. School Committee members pledge to listen respectfully to all public comments without interrupting or engaging in conversation or debate.
8. Written comments are appreciated and encouraged. Written remarks can be sent to the School Committee via the Superintendent's office or email.

¹: General Laws of Rhode Island, § [42-46-1.2.5](#)

Barrington Public Schools School Committee