

SANBORN REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

SRSD File: BEDH

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT BOARD MEETINGS

The primary purpose of School Board meetings is to conduct the business of the Board as it relates to school policies, programs, and operations. The Board encourages residents to attend Board meetings so that they may become acquainted with the operation and programs of the schools. All official meetings of the Board shall be open to the press and public. However, the Board reserves the right to meet and to adjourn or recess a meeting at any time. The Board also reserves the right to enter non-public session at any time, in accordance with the provisions RSA 91-A:3.

In order to assure that persons who wish to appear before the Board may be heard and, at the same time, it may conduct its meetings properly and efficiently, the Board adopts as policy the following procedures and rules pertaining to public participation at Board meetings:

30 minutes will be set aside for citizens to address the Board (one 15-minute period prior to new business and one 15-minute period at the conclusion of new business). This period may be extended by a majority vote of the Board. Speakers will be allotted three minutes per person.

1. Residents of Newton, Kingston, Fremont, parents of currently enrolled students, and Sanborn Regional School District staff may offer comments on current school district matters only. The Board will not entertain comments on items that do not pertain to current school district matters. Requests to address the Board on matters that do not pertain to current school district matters must be presented to the Superintendent and must set forth the specifics of the subject to be addressed. When appropriate, the Board may place such requests on the agenda.
2. Consistent with RSA 91-A:3, Policy BEDB, and the laws pertaining to student and family privacy rights, the Board will not permit public comment nor place any matter on the public agenda that are to be properly discussed in a non-public session. Complaints regarding individual employees, personnel or students will be terminated immediately and such comments will be directed to the Superintendent in accord with Policies KE and KEB.

3. All speakers are to conduct themselves in a civil manner. Obscene, libelous, defamatory, or violent statements will be considered out of order and will not be tolerated. The Board Chair may terminate the speaker's privilege of address if the speaker does not follow this rule of order.
4. Comments which do not adhere to the above provisions, may be ruled out of order by the Board Chair. Repeated violations may result in the Board Chair terminating the speaker's privilege of address, and possibly deeming the violations a disruption to be treated as discussed in section C below.
5. Persons appearing before the Board are reminded that the public comment period is an opportunity for members of the public to provide their input to the Board, but public comment is not a question-and-answer session. Board members are without authority to answer – spontaneously on behalf of the Board. Thus, in most instances, Board response, if any, will be deferred pending consideration by the full Board.

Meeting Disruptions.

The primary purpose of School Board meetings is to conduct the business of the Board as it relates to school policies, programs, and operations. While members of the public have the right to attend and offer input during the public comment period of meetings, they do not have the right to disrupt the Board during its meeting. Impermissible disruptions include, but are not limited to:

- Speaking while someone else has been recognized by the Chair.
- Obstructing the view of others with posters or otherwise or speaking loudly or shouting during a meeting.
- Refusing to terminate public comment after that speaker's time has expired.
- Any other sustained or intentionally loud noises after the Chair has called for order; or
- Any other conduct intended to disrupt the meeting or interfere with the person speaking.

If, after at least two warnings from the Board Chair, a member of the public continues to disrupt the meeting by words or actions, the Board Chair may direct the person to leave the meeting. Upon refusal, the Chair may request assistance from law enforcement officials to have the individual removed, with the potential for criminal charges. Interruptions may result in a recess or provided the thirty minutes for public comment has expired, an adjournment of the meeting.

Members of the public appearing before the Board are reminded that members of the Board are without authority to act independently as individuals on official matters. Thus, questions may be directed to individual Board members, but answers must be deferred pending consideration by the full Board.

Legal References:

U.S. Const., 1st Amendment

RSA 91-A:2, Meetings Open to the Public

RSA 91-A:3, Non-Public Sessions

RSA 189:65, VII & VII-a - Definitions (Student and Teacher personally identifiable information)

RSA 189:74, School Board Public Comment Period

RSA 644:2, Disturbing the Peace

State v. Comely, 130 N.H. 688 (1988)

State v. Dominic, 117 N.H. 573 (1977)

Legal References Disclaimer: These references are not intended to be considered part of this policy, nor should they be taken as a comprehensive statement of the legal basis for the Board to enact this policy, nor as a complete recitation of related legal authority. Instead, they are provided as additional resources for those interested in the subject matter of the policy.

History:

Original Effective: August 22, 1979

Revised: January 22, 1997

Reaffirmed: August 11, 2010

Revised: December 19, 2018

Revised: August 18, 2021

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