

Policy BEDH - PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT BOARD MEETINGS

Regular, special and emergency meetings of the school board are open to the public. This board, as an elected representative body of the school unit, wishes to provide opportunity for citizens to express interests and concerns related to the matters under consideration by the board. The public is cordially invited to attend and participate as set forth in this policy.

Board meetings are conducted for the purpose of carrying on the official business of the school system. The meetings are not public forum meetings (as are town meetings), but are meetings which are held for the board to do its business in public. The minutes of each public meeting will record the action taken and will show how the board voted on each item presented for action. The journal of minutes is open and available to the public during normal business hours in the Office of the Superintendent of Schools and on the WBSAU website.

Orderly conduct of a meeting does not permit spontaneous discussion between the audience and board members. Individuals or organizations desiring to make requests, or proposals on matters before the board will be provided that opportunity during the public session.

At the discretion of the Chair, public participation shall be allowed just prior to board discussion of the agenda items upon which citizens wish to comment. The chair may also allow at his/her discretion public input during the discussion of agenda items.

The intent of this policy is to allow a fair and adequate opportunity for the public to be heard, to provide adequate time for the board to obtain necessary information on a subject before it, and to see that time allowed for open discussion does not interfere with the fulfillment of the scheduled agenda of the board.

An agenda shall be published in advance of each meeting in accordance with board policy. Copies are to be posted or available at the West Bath School, the West Bath Town Office, and on the WBSAU website. Anyone desiring additional information about any item on the agenda should direct such inquiries to the Office of the Superintendent.

The following ground rules are to further guide public participation at meetings:

- A. The chair may limit the time given to comments on a particular topic as well as the amount of time any individual may speak.
- B. In the event of many persons wishing to speak, the chair may require persons interested in speaking to so indicate by signing up to speak, so they may be called on in the most expedient order.
- C. Citizens, employees, and others with a legitimate interest in the board's business are welcome to participate as provided in this policy. Others may be recognized to speak at the board's discretion. Employees or employee groups will not be permitted to discuss matters for which other, more appropriate forums are provided.
- D. All speakers are to identify themselves as they begin talking. Speakers will not be permitted to participate in gossip, make defamatory comments, or use abusive or vulgar language.
- E. The board chair will maintain the prerogative to discontinue any presentation which violates any of the public participation guidelines.

- F. All speakers are to address the board chair and may direct questions or comments to board members or other officers of the school system only upon approval of the chair. Members of the board and the superintendent have the privilege of asking questions of any person who addresses the board. Such questions must be addressed through the chair.
- G. Comments and suggestions will be welcomed and given consideration by the board, including written comments. Speakers may offer objective comments on school operations and programs that concern them. Generally, the board may hear but not discuss or act on an item not on the agenda. Personnel matters or complaints will not be entertained in a public meeting but will be deferred to established resolution procedures.
- H. No complaints or allegations will be allowed concerning any personnel or any person connected to the school system. If appropriate, concerns about an individual will be handled in a conference where the rights and interests of all parties will be appropriately regarded.
- I. Generally, duplication or repetition of comments to the board should be avoided in order to make the most efficient use of the time in meetings. Groups or organizations are requested to be represented by designated spokespersons.
- J. If a member of the public or group desires to make a public presentation on business germane to the Board, that request should be made through the superintendent's office as a future agenda item.
- K. Special procedures shall be in place in case of disturbance or disorder. Such procedure shall be prepared and reviewed annually by the superintendent, board chair, board attorney, and others, as appropriate, and attached to this policy as board regulations BEDH-R.

Legal Reference:

TITLE 1 MRSA SEC. 401, ET SEQ. – FREEDOM OF ACCESS

Cross Reference:

BEC - EXECUTIVE SESSION

BEDA - NOTIFICATION OF BOARD MEETINGS

BEDBA - AGENDA PREPARATION AND DISSEMINATION BEDC - QUORUM

BEDD - RULES OF ORDER

BEDG - MINUTES

First Reading: 05/20/15

Second Reading: 06/08/15

Adoption: 06/08/15