

## **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. This policy applies only to meetings of the full Board, not to meetings of Board subcommittees.

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.

Individuals or organizations desiring to make requests, or proposals on matters before the board will be provided that opportunity during the public session.

The CRCS board wants all present to be able to actively participate in the discussions and have their opinions heard. 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 as long as the discussion does not interfere with the fulfillment of the scheduled agenda of the board.

The intent of this policy is to allow a fair and adequate opportunity for the public to be heard while ensuring that the time allowed for public discussion does not interfere with the fulfillment of the scheduled agenda.

An agenda shall be published in advance of each meeting in accordance with board policy. Copies are to be posted or available at CRCS offices and on the CRCS website. Anyone desiring additional information about any item on the agenda should direct such inquiries to the Executive Director.

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. The Chair will recognize who is invited to speak. 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 Executive Director have the privilege of asking questions of any person who addresses the board. Such questions must be addressed through the chair. Requests for information or concerns that require further research may be referred to the Executive Director to be addressed at a later time or outside of Board meetings in accordance with predetermined roles and responsibilities, procedures or other policies.
- 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, learner, 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 Executive Director as a future agenda item.

The Chair has the authority to stop any presentation that violates these guidelines or the privacy rights of others. Persons who disrupt the meeting may be asked to leave, and the Chair may request law enforcement assistance as necessary. In the event of an emergency or substantial disruption, the Chair may declare a recess to restore order or may declare the meeting adjourned or to be continued to a designated time and place or at the call of the Chair.

Legal Reference: 1 MRSA Sec. 401, ET SEQ. – FREEDOM OF ACCESS

20 MRSA Sec 1001(20)

Cross Reference: BEDA - NOTIFICATION OF BOARD MEETINGS

KEB - Feedback and Complaints and KEB-R Procedure

Adopted: 8/29/2012

Revised: 1/16/23