Policy

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT MEETINGS**

*Code* **BEDH** *Issued* **1/19**

The public is cordially invited to attend board meetings to become better acquainted with the operation and programs of the school district. The board conducts meetings for the purpose of carrying on the official business of the school district. The meetings are not public hearing meetings but are meetings held in public. Public participation will be permitted only as indicated on the agenda and at the discretion of the board.

In order that the board may conduct the meeting in a civil and professional manner, comments from the public should not include gossip, defamatory words, or abusive and vulgar language. The board reserves the right to terminate any presentation which does not adhere to the guidelines set forth in this policy.

Orderly conduct of a meeting does not permit spontaneous discussion from the audience. All persons who wish to participate must do so through established procedures. These procedures are designed to encourage participation and ensure the orderly management of the meetings. The board is committed to compliance with the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act as well as all other federal and state laws which regulate or affect board actions and policy.

# Agenda Items

Citizens wanting an item to be placed on the agenda for a specific board meeting should direct requests to the superintendent or board chair. A citizen must submit a written request for an item to be placed on the agenda no later than 5:00 p.m. on the fifth working day prior to a scheduled meeting of the board. That request will state the name of the individual or group submitting the request, the address, the purpose of the request, and the topic to be addressed.

The chair of the board will introduce speakers who have previously submitted a request to the board at the appropriate time during the meeting and invite them to make comments on agenda topics. Speakers may offer objective comments on school operations and programs that concern them. The board will not permit in public session any expression of personal complaints about individual school personnel or any other person connected with the school system.

The chair reserves the right to limit discussion of same topic issues in an effort to provide individuals the opportunity to be heard on a variety of topics. The chair also reserves the right to limit time for individual speakers. Public participation will not exceed 30 minutes total and three minutes per speaker unless waived by a majority vote of the board. Consideration may be given for a public hearing for gaining input on critical issues.

**Open Forum**

The board may provide a specified period of time for comments from any citizen, group representative, employee, parent/legal guardian, or student regarding any topic over which the board has jurisdiction. If the board determines there is not sufficient time at a meeting for public comments, the comment period may be deferred to the next scheduled meeting or to a special called meeting. The board reserves the right to allocate a period of time for this purpose and limit time for speakers accordingly.

All persons who wish to comment during the open forum period will fill out the appropriate form provided by the board before the meeting begins. The chair of the board will introduce speakers who have signed up on the appropriate form and invite them to address the board. The chair reserves the right to limit discussion of same topic issues in an effort to provide individuals the opportunity to be heard on a variety of topics.

The board will not permit any expression of personal complaints about individual school personnel or any other person connected with the school system during public session. Specific student or personnel issues should be handled through the appropriate procedures as indicated in district policy.

Presentations for unsolicited services will not be permitted. Companies or businesses offering services of possible interest to the district should send information to the district office for distribution to the appropriate school district officials.

The board may provide factual information or recite existing policy in response to inquiries, but the board will not deliberate or decide matters regarding any subject not included on the agenda. The board may request that staff members address any concerns or comments presented by the public during the open forum.

Cf. BEDB

Adopted 1/29/19

Legal References:

A. S.C. Code of Laws, 1976, as amended:

1. Section 30-4-10, *et seq.* - South Carolina Freedom of Information Act.