

Community Relations

Public Participation at Board of Education Meetings

The regular and special meetings of the Bristol Board of Education are open to the public and representatives of the press except ~~that a part of any meeting may be designated~~ for an executive session as provided by law. (See 9324 for details)

The Board of Education welcomes participation of interested organizations and individuals. ~~Agendas of all regular and special meetings of the Board of Education are posted in accordance with rules of the Town Charter.~~ Advance announcement of all regular and special meetings of the Board of Education is made through posting the agenda on the district website, through notices to newspapers, and directly to citizens and community and professional organizations who specifically request such notification. A reasonable charge may be made for those persons or organizations requesting advance announcements of meetings and agenda backup materials.

~~Participation by the general public in debate at regular meetings of matters before the Board of Education shall be permitted. Public participation shall be subject to the provision enumerated below. On issues that appear to arouse strong public interest, the Board should, whenever possible, schedule a special meeting limited to that subject. In order to limit or close debate on any subject, a majority vote of those Board members in attendance will be required.~~

Board meetings are meetings held in public and are not open hearings. Once the Board moves into the regular agenda, the public may participate as allowed by the Chairperson and with the following restrictions:

1. Everyone is requested to address the Chair for recognition.
2. Each speaker must state his/her name ~~and~~ address ~~and the topic.~~
3. ~~All speakers must observe rules of common etiquette. Personalities are not to be injected. Anyone violating this rule will be denied the floor. Unless waived by the Chairperson or a majority of the Board,~~ Each speaker shall limit his/her ~~their~~ remarks to ~~three (3)–four (4)~~ minutes. A speaker will not be recognized for a second time.
4. ~~A speaker will not be recognized for a second time on the same topic.~~ Each speaker is to confine their remarks to matters within the Board's jurisdiction or the specific topic for which the speaker signed up. The Chairperson may remind speakers to direct their remarks to matters within the Board's jurisdiction but shall not restrict or terminate a speaker's time solely on the basis of the viewpoint expressed or the specific subject matter addressed, consistent with Paragraphs 5 and 6 of this policy. Speakers whose remarks do not pertain to matters within the Board's jurisdiction will be so advised by the Chairperson and their comments will be noted for the record.

5. ~~Each speaker must concern himself/herself with the topic under discussion. Anyone digressing from the topic will be ruled out of order.~~ The Board shall not restrict speech based on viewpoint, opinion, or disagreement with Board actions or policies.
6. ~~Written statements and materials may be made available, in advance of comments, for distribution to Board members.~~ To ensure the orderly conduct of meetings, the Board shall have the authority to adopt and enforce reasonable regulations governing the time, place, and manner of participation and proceedings, provided that such regulations are content-neutral and are applied uniformly to all participants.
7. ~~Speakers shall state their positions on the subject being discussed.~~ Comments involving confidential student information protected by law (FERPA) are strictly prohibited. The Board strongly encourages members of the public to route complaints regarding individual district personnel through the proper administrative chain of command rather than airing them publicly.
8. ~~Board members will not respond directly to comments during the Board meeting. The Superintendent will direct the question to the appropriate staff member for follow up.~~ Written statements and supporting materials may be made available, in to the Board.
9. Board members will not respond directly to public comments during the Board meeting. The Superintendent or Chairperson may briefly provide factual clarification or route the inquiry to the appropriate staff member for follow up. The Board will consider such comments in its policy deliberations and, where appropriate, will refer comments to school department personnel for the review as part of their administrative function.
10. Speakers cannot donate their allotted time to other individuals or speak on behalf of an organized group to extend their time.
11. Intentionally disruptive behavior, harassment, vulgarity, obscene language, or physical threats are strictly prohibited. The Chairperson maintains the legal authority to warn a disruptive speaker, terminate their time, or order the room cleared if order cannot be restored.

(cf. 1312 - Public Complaints)

Legal Reference: ~~Connecticut General Statutes~~

~~Public Participation at Board Meetings~~

~~1-225 Meetings of government agencies to be public.~~

~~1-226 Broadcasting or photographing meetings.~~

~~1-230 Regular meetings to be held pursuant to regulation, ordinance or resolution.~~

~~1-232 Conduct of meetings.~~

(cf. ~~1312~~ - Public Complaints)

(cf. ~~9323~~ - Construction of the Agenda)

(cf. ~~9325~~ - Meeting Conduct)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

1-225 Meetings of government agencies to be public. [Recording of votes. Schedule and agenda of meetings to be filed.](#) [Notice of special meetings.](#) [Executive sessions.](#)

1-226 Broadcasting or photographing meetings.

~~19a-342 Smoking in public meetings in rooms of public building prohibited.~~

~~1-227 Mailing of notice of meetings to persons filing written request. Fees.~~

~~1-230 Regular meetings to be held pursuant to regulation, ordinance or resolution.~~

~~1-232 Conduct of meetings.~~

~~1-206 Denial of access to public records or meetings.~~

~~10-238 Petition for hearing by board of education.~~

Policy Adopted: July 7, 1993

Revised: March 1, 2017

BRISTOL PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Bristol, Connecticut