

## Community Relations

### Public Participation at Board of Education Meetings

~~The Board encourages public participation during the public comment portion of the meeting. The Chairperson reserves the right to limit public comment. Furthermore, the public is encouraged to attend the Board of Education subcommittee meetings where public discussion of issues is welcomed.~~

~~Each speaker, Board of Education and public, should try to speak directly to the point in as concise a manner as possible and should not repeat a previous comment. Pursuant to our Board Policy, public participation is limited to no more than three (3) minutes per speaker and a total of no more than fifteen (15) minutes. Individuals who wish to speak longer are encouraged to attend any and all related subcommittee meetings where most of the Board's groundwork is done. Persons wishing to address the Board should give their names.~~

Board meetings are meetings held in public and are not open hearings. Participation by the general public in debate at regular meetings of matters before the Board of Education shall be permitted. Furthermore, the public is encouraged to attend the Board of Education subcommittee meetings where public discussion of issues is welcomed.

Public participation at regular meetings shall be subject to the provisions enumerated below. On issues where ~~there is~~ strong public interest is evident, the Board should, whenever possible, schedule a special meeting or hold a hearing limited to that subject. The Board Chairperson reserves the right to limit public discussion and/or comment at any time. However, in order to limit or close ~~debate~~ discussion on any subject, a majority vote of those Board members in attendance will be required.

1. Everyone is required to address the Chair for recognition.
2. Each speaker must state his/her ~~full and complete name and address~~ first and last name and street and town.
3. All speakers must observe rules of common etiquette. Personal attacks on Board members and employees shall not be permitted, and it is expected that all speakers will conduct themselves appropriately, and with decorum. Anyone violating the rules of etiquette will be denied the floor, unless waived by either the Chairperson, or a majority vote of the Board.
4. Each speaker is limited to a maximum of ~~five~~ three (3) minutes, and the total amount of meeting time dedicated to public comment shall not exceed ~~fifteen (15)~~ thirty (30) minutes. A speaker will not be recognized for a second time unless time remains after all have been heard. Speakers are requested to avoid redundancy, and not repeat a previous comment. ~~The Board may modify these limitations at the beginning of the meeting if the number of persons wishing to speak makes it advisable to do so.~~
5. Each speaker ~~should~~ must limit their comments to items on the agenda, and/or items under discussion at the meeting. The Chair reserves the right to limit public comment that is untimely or off-topic, and rule the speaker out of order.
6. Following each vote on a motion, the Chairperson will announce the decision of the Board and announce its import.

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7. Lengthy written statements should not be read during public comment. Written statements and any supporting materials should be made available in advance for distribution to Board members.
8. Speakers shall clearly state their positions on the subject being discussed. Those who have questions shall, whenever possible, submit them in writing in advance of the meeting.
9. Speakers are asked to express themselves in a civil manner, with due respect for the dignity and privacy of others who may be affected by their comments. While it is not the Board's intent to stifle public comment, speakers should be aware that if their statements violate the rights of others under the law of defamation or invasion of privacy, the speaker may be held legally responsible. Speakers unsure of the legal ramification of what they are about to say are urged to consult first with their legal advisor.

(cf. 1312 Public Complaints)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

1-225 Meetings of government agents 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 meeting.

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

10-238 Petition for hearing by board of education.

Policy adopted: June 21, 2007  
 Policy revised: June 18, 2015  
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NEW FAIRFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
 New Fairfield, Connecticut