

Public Hearing – Conducting a Public Hearing

Board Policy on Public Hearings:

Board policy 214, Public Hearings, was last reviewed by the Belmont-Klemme School Board on October 23, 2018. The policy stipulates how this school board will conduct its public hearings.

Policy 214 states,

“Public hearings may be held on school district matters at the discretion of the board. Public notice of a public hearing will be in the same manner as for a board meeting except that the notice will be given at least ten days before the hearing is to be held unless it is impossible or impractical to do so, or the law requires otherwise.

“At public hearings, citizens of the district who register at the door will be allowed to speak on the issue for which the public hearing is being held. Others may be allowed to speak at the board’s discretion.

“Speakers are asked to keep their remarks as brief as possible. Prior to the beginning of the hearing, speakers and spectators will be apprised of the rules of order to be followed regarding time limitations, questions, remarks and rebuttals. In no event will a speaker be allowed to take the time of another speaker.

“The board will conduct public hearings in an orderly fashion. At the beginning of the hearing, statements, background materials and public hearing rules and procedures will be presented by the board president.

“The board president will recognize the speakers. A board member may ask questions of the speakers after receiving permission from the board president. Only those speakers recognized by the chair will be allowed to speak. Comments by others are out of order. Individuals who interfere with or interrupt speakers, the board, or the proceedings will be asked to leave.”

Procedure for Conducting a Public Hearing:

1. The Board President will read aloud the following statement:
 - a) “The Board of Directors will now conduct a public hearing on the proposed

High School Addition and Renovation Project.

Any resident or taxpayer may present objections to, or arguments in favor of, any part of the proposal.”

- b) "The Board Secretary will maintain a sign-in sheet at her table for each person who wishes to make oral comments. Anyone who wants to do so must enter his/her full name and address on the sign-in sheet, in the spaces provided."
 - c) "The Board will accept written comments provided all written comments are given to me, the Board President, before the close of this public hearing."
 - d) "Only those recognized by me, the Board President, may address the Board. Upon being recognized, the person must identify himself or herself by clearly stating his or her full name."
 - e) "Anyone choosing to speak must address his or her remarks to the Board, and not to other members of the audience."
 - f) "If we have a large number of people wishing to address the Board, I reserve the right to limit comments to no more than five minutes per person."
 - g) "The Board is here to listen to the public's comments, and to answer questions about the subject of the hearing. The Board is not here to express its own views or opinions thereon. The Board will not participate in a debate of the issues. We want your advice and assistance in coming to the proper conclusion on the issues involved."
2. At a public hearing, the board members are hearing officers. As such, they should listen to the testimony of the individuals speaking to the board. They should carefully consider the arguments. At the discretion of the board president, board members may wish to ask thoughtful questions of the speakers.
 3. Board members should avoid taking sides during the hearing, advocating for one side or another, or engaging in arguments or discussion with the speakers or other school board members.

Tips for Dealing with Large Crowds:

1. Large crowds should be advised of the procedure to be followed before the meeting or hearing begins, including, but not limited to, as any time limits or signature requirements.
2. Advise the crowd that individuals may submit written comments.
3. Inform the crowd that the Board will receive and consider written materials, and that individuals are discouraged from reading letters at the podium.
4. Do not permit members of the public to cross-examine others; inform participants that all comments should be addressed to the board.
5. Encourage individuals to not only express their opinion, but the reasons for their opinion.