

## **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

In order to provide for full and open communication between the public (students, teachers, administrators and members of the community) and the Arlington School Committee, the Committee authorizes several avenues for the exchange of information, ideas, and opinions. All of the following operate within the framework of the Committee's scheduled meetings.

1. Written correspondence may be directed to the Committee through its administrative secretary. Statements of two pages or less are encouraged.
2. At the beginning of each regular meeting of the Committee, individuals or group representatives may address the Committee on items of school business. The length of the public participation segment shall normally be no more than 20 minutes, but may be extended by the Chairperson. Speakers will be allowed three (3) minutes to present their material. The Chairperson may permit extension of this time limit. The Committee may respond to public comment, at the discretion of the Chairperson, but extended discussion of issues during public participation is discouraged. If a particular issue arises during public participation that warrants an extended discussion, the Chairperson may defer such discussion until a future meeting, and schedule an agenda item accordingly.
3. A citizen who wishes to have an item placed on the agenda will present the request in writing to the administrative secretary. To be considered, the request must be received by noon of the day preceding the meeting.
4. From time to time, the School Committee may schedule a public hearing on any matter of concern to the community, including the annual budget.
5. Improper conduct and remarks will not be allowed. Defamatory or abusive remarks are always out of order. If a speaker persists in improper conduct or remarks, the chairperson may terminate that individual's privilege of address.
6. All remarks will be addressed through the chairperson of the meeting.
7. Speakers may offer such objective criticisms of the school operations and programs as concern them, but in public session the committee will not hear personal complaints of school personnel nor against any member of the school community. Under most circumstances, administrative channels are the proper means for disposition of legitimate complaints involving staff members.
8. Written comments longer than three (3) minutes may be presented to the committee before or after the meeting for the committee members review and consideration at an appropriate time.

All meetings of the Committee shall be presided over by the Chairperson with the primary purpose of conducting the business of the Committee in a responsible and expeditious manner. The Chairperson shall have the authority to regulate and limit public participation within the provisions of this policy. The Committee may determine to limit or alter this authority by majority vote. However, by law, "no person shall address a public meeting of a governmental body without permission of the presiding officer at such meeting, and all persons shall, at the request of such presiding officer, be silent."

LEGAL REF.: M.G.L. 39:23C

CROSS REF.: BE, School Committee Meetings

**Revised and approved October 9, 2007**