

**Franklin Public Schools  
Franklin, Massachusetts 02038**

**Action Required**

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**Subject:** Policy 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading/Adoption

**Date:** March 10, 2020

**Dept:** School Committee

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**Reason:** Required Vote

**Enclosure:** yes

**Recommendation:**

Policy – 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading / Adoption

I recommend adoption of policy BEDH – Public Participation at School Committee meetings as detailed.

**Action Requested of the School Committee:**

Majority vote of the School Committee is required.

<u><b>Vote Tabulator</b></u>	
A Bergen:	Y / N      T Keenan: Y / N
J D'Angelo:	Y / N      M J Scofield: Y / N
J Pond-Pfeffer:	Y / N      D Spencer: Y / N
E Stokes:	Y / N      Action: _____

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

All regular and special meetings of the Franklin School Committee shall be open to the public. Executive sessions will be held only as prescribed by the Massachusetts General Laws.

The Chair of the Franklin School Committee shall preside at all meetings of the Committee and as such has the responsibility to conduct an effective business meeting.

The Committee desires citizens of the District to attend its meetings so that they may become better acquainted with the operations and the programs of our local public schools. In addition, the Committee would like the opportunity to hear the wishes and ideas of the public.

Public comment is not a discussion, debate, or dialogue between individuals and the School Committee. It is an individual's opportunity to express an opinion on issues within the School Committee's authority.

In order that all citizens who wish to be heard before the Committee have a chance and to ensure the ability of the Committee to conduct the District's business in an orderly manner, the following rules and procedures are adopted:

1. The Committee will hold a public participation segment (also called Citizen's Comments) about matters not related to an agenda item at the beginning of each regular Committee meeting. The Committee will listen, but not respond, to any comment made. Written comments may be presented to the Committee before or after the meeting for the Committee members' review and consideration at an appropriate time.
2. The Chair shall determine the length of the public participation segment and the length of each individual's public comments, provided that each individual's comments is equal in length.
3. The Committee will hear public comments related to an agenda item when the Chair deems appropriate during the Committee meeting. Topics for discussion during the meeting must be limited to those items listed on the Committee meeting agenda for that evening. The Chair shall determine the length of public participation related to agenda items and the length of individuals' public comments.
4. A Committee member may add an agenda item to a future meeting as a result of a citizen comment during the public participation segment. If the Committee believes that an issue requires a dialogue with the Franklin community, the Committee may schedule a separate public hearing on that issue.
5. Improper conduct will not be allowed. Defamatory, improper, or abusive remarks are always out of order. If a speaker persists in improper conduct or defamatory, improper, or abusive remarks, the Chair may terminate that individual's privilege of address.

Defamatory remarks shall mean remarks that have been adjudicated defamatory. Improper and/or abusive remarks shall mean obscenities, vulgarities, threats, and fighting words or remarks likely to provoke a violent reaction.

6. All remarks will be addressed through the Chair of the meeting.
7. Speakers may offer such comments and criticisms of the school operations and programs as concern them and which are within the School Committee's scope of responsibility, but in public session the Committee will not hear personal complaints of school personnel nor against any member of the school community which are outside the scope of the School Committee's responsibility. Under most circumstances, administrative channels are the proper means for disposition of legitimate complaints involving staff members. Please refer to the School Committee policies KE – Public Complaints and KE-E – School Department Communication Procedure for more information.

If a member of the public wants to have an issue addressed at a Committee meeting, the individual must notify the Chair in writing no later than five (5) days prior to the meeting. Such request should contain background statements explaining the scope and intent of the issue. The Chair reserves the right to place the issue on the agenda, send the issue to subcommittee, direct the issue to appropriate school personnel, or reject the request.

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. c. 30A, §§ 18-25; MASC July 2016

CROSS REFS.: BDB School Committee Officers  
BEDB Order of Business  
KE Public Complaints  
KE-E School Department Communication Procedure

Adopted by School Committee: 11/28/2017

Reviewed, revised, adopted by School Committee: 10/15/19

To School Committee for Second Reading/Adoption: 3/10/2020