



Rules and Protocols of the Franklin School  
Committee

Adopted February 28, 2023

## **Norms and Protocols**

In the interest of functioning as an effective and productive deliberating committee, in support of all students in our District, we affirm the following guidelines for the Franklin School Committee.

We believe that we should model the highest form of respect and collegiality within Committee deliberations. We will strive to reach decisions by consensus, discussing ideas with civility, and disagreeing without acrimony. Committee deliberations are the time for advocacy and for the expression of differing viewpoints and concerns by the School Committee.

The Superintendent and the School Committee represent the educational and developmental needs and interests of all students in the District and place those interests above all others in the decisions we make.

It is the responsibility of the School Committee to oversee and vote on the budget, to create policy, to hire and evaluate the Superintendent, and to participate in the long-term planning and the vision for the District.

It is the responsibility of the Superintendent to manage the day-to-day operations of the District, including overseeing the hiring, evaluation, and handling of personnel issues. The School Committee evaluates the Superintendent's effectiveness in these matters.

We will refer any important questions or concerns received from members of the community to the Superintendent. The Superintendent, not any School Committee member, has the authority to investigate. It is not the role of the School Committee to resolve issues.

When a constituent brings a concern to a School Committee member, we will listen respectfully and seek to gain a sense of the efforts they have made on their own to address the problem. We encourage problem-solving at the most direct level following the Community Communication Guidelines (<https://www.franklinps.net/district/families/pages/community-communication-guidelines>) and will support constituents in addressing concerns directly with the administrator who can help to resolve the issue.

We acknowledge that all School Committee meetings while they are held in public, they are not public meetings. This is equivalent to citizens being able to observe our representatives deliberating at the State House, but citizens do not participate in the discussions. There may be times when the School Committee and/or the District hold public meetings to give more opportunity for public comments on important issues.

We make every effort to ensure that meetings are effective and efficient. To that end, we acknowledge the importance of subcommittees, and we and the Superintendent agree to utilize them to focus on specific topics in depth and to prepare for presentation, deliberation, and possible action by the full School Committee.

We will conduct business with a set agenda published at least 48 hours in advance. Emerging business shall be addressed in subsequent meetings through a planned agenda, unless it is determined by the School Committee Chair that it would be detrimental to delay the issue. Ideally, requests to add items to an agenda shall be made to the School Committee Chair a week prior to the meeting.

We will attend meetings well-prepared, having read the packets, to deliberate issues on the agenda and to participate in efficient decision-making. We will engage in critical thinking, listening to differing viewpoints prior to making a Committee decision.

Each member will have an equal opportunity to express their views and opinions and to relay their input in a brief, concise, and topic-focused manner. School Committee members are recognized by the Chair before speaking.

Remarks must be courteous in language and behavior, with a focus on the issue and the facts rather than on personalities.

School Committee members will vote according to their convictions and will uphold and support the decisions of the majority of the Committee. They will not actively undermine the work of the majority. Members recognize that authority rests with the decision of the School Committee. Freedom of speech allows School Committee members the right to respectfully express their own opinions to the public, but they should clearly state when they are not speaking in their role as a School Committee member.

School Committee members will be mindful of personal bias. It is the duty of members to be scrupulous about identifying and avoiding conflicts of interest and to abstain from discussions and votes about those topics. Members may contact the MA State Ethics Commission if they have questions. (<https://www.mass.gov/orgs/state-ethics-commission>)

School Committee members will respect the confidentiality of Executive Sessions.

The Superintendent and the School Committee recognize the importance of proactive communication. If School Committee members have questions or concerns, they agree to contact the Superintendent or Chair well in advance of a meeting. We strive to make sure there are no surprises.

Requests for information will be channeled through the Superintendent and/or the School Committee Chair rather than directly to district staff.

We will ensure that we do not breach the Open Meeting Law by deliberating outside of duly convened meetings of the Committee. Members must exercise caution when using email and social media to avoid accidentally reaching a quorum. (<https://www.mass.gov/doc/open-meeting-law-guide-and-educational-materials-0/download>)

School Committee members, recognizing the importance of professional growth and development, will participate in experiences designed to further their knowledge and understanding and to advance the work of our public schools. Members are encouraged to attend the regular professional development meetings offered by the Committee.

The Superintendent and School Committee recognize the importance of working collaboratively with town officials to improve our schools, and we will actively seek ways to enlist their support in our efforts.

School Committee members will exercise discretion and good judgment if they maintain a website, social media page, or blog to ensure they are supporting the best interests of all students. In our role as School Committee members and instructional leaders in the community, we will ensure that our communication is appropriate for all ages.

## **Franklin School Committee Rules**

1. A chair will be elected by roll call vote.
2. A vice-chair will be elected by a roll call vote.
3. The School Committee will adopt rules set out in this document.
4. The School Committee will review the Massachusetts Association of School Committee's [Member Handbook Code of Ethics](#) at the organizational meeting.
5. The School Committee will review the Massachusetts Association of School Committee's [Roles and Responsibilities of School Committee Members](#) at the organizational meeting.
6. The Superintendent will submit a schedule of regular meetings to the School Committee for approval during January/February for the following school year.
7. The Superintendent has the discretion to cancel a meeting and notify all members as soon as possible.
8. The chair of a subcommittee may cancel or otherwise postpone a subcommittee meeting. The chair is responsible for the notification of subcommittee members, the Superintendent, and any invited guests.
9. The Superintendent will notify the Town Clerk immediately following receipt of any proper cancellation of a meeting.
10. In the event of an emergency due to extraordinary circumstances, the requirement that notification of cancellation is provided in writing may be waived, and members may notify the Superintendent of their desire to cancel a meeting by telephone, email, or in person. Any verbal request for cancellation must be followed by a written request.
11. Special meetings of the School Committee may be called by the chair. No less than forty-eight (48) hours (excluding Saturday, Sundays, and holidays) notice of a special meeting will be given to each member. The Superintendent will notify all members by telephone, email, or in-person and will follow any verbal notification with a written notification of such meeting to each member. The question or proposals for consideration will be specifically stated in the notice, and no other matter will come before the School Committee at such a meeting. The time and place of special meetings will be designated in the notice.
12. Workshops or Retreats may be scheduled on an as-needed basis. Votes may not be taken except upon a motion to adjourn at a retreat. The meeting will not be broadcast or recorded; however, being a meeting in public, the meeting will allow members of the public to attend. The public will not be offered an opportunity to speak. The chair and the Superintendent will jointly determine the agenda for a retreat in consultation with other members of the School Committee.
13. The chair of the School Committee, and if unavailable, the chair will delegate the vice-chair, when needed, to have a standing meeting with the Superintendent before any scheduled meeting, workshop, or hearing to collaborate on agenda setting and to help focus both the agenda of the School Committee and the Superintendent on the goals of the School Committee. Such standing meetings will be held by agreement between the Superintendent and the chair or vice-chair if delegated.

14. The Minutes of the School Committee will be published and distributed under the direction of the Superintendent. Minutes will include the date, time, place; members present or absent and the time when a member arrives late or leaves early; and a complete record of all decisions made and actions taken at each meeting, including a record of all votes and a summary of the discussions on each subject. On all matters on which there has been a roll-call vote, the minutes will reflect the votes of the individual members, as well as the member that motioned and seconded. A list of all documents and other exhibits used at the meeting must also be included in the minutes.
15. Minutes should be approved prior to being released to the public, in accordance with the MGL Chapter 30A Section 18 through 25.
16. The chair of the School Committee, subject to approval by the School Committee, will establish standing committees in the first month of each term.
17. Subcommittees will be composed of three Members. Subcommittee appointments and selection of the chair for each subcommittee will occur during the Organizational meeting of the School Committee.
18. Subcommittees will only meet at the direction of the School Committee to consider a specific matter.
19. Subcommittee meetings will be scheduled by the chair of the subcommittee in consultation with the members.
20. Subcommittees will provide policy recommendations or other matters for consideration by reporting out as favorable or unfavorable to the School Committee at a regular meeting.
21. Special subcommittees and ad hoc subcommittees may be established as proposed by the chair and confirmed by a vote of the School Committee with such membership and duties, and for such duration as the School Committee deems fit. The School Committee will appoint members from the School Committee membership of any special subcommittee or ad hoc subcommittee.
22. The School Committee may establish advisory committees.
23. At the beginning of each regular meeting of the School Committee, the attendance taken will include the student representative(s). Student representatives serve as non-voting members of the School Committee. Student representatives will be encouraged to participate in School Committee meetings.
24. All School Committee business, including correspondence, must be received in the Office of the Superintendent not later than 12:00 PM on the Monday before the day of the next regular meeting of the School Committee, and the agenda with packet materials, will be delivered to the School Committee by 5:00 PM on the Friday before the regular meeting. Members of the School Committee will make every effort to ask questions about the packet materials to the Superintendent or their designee on the Monday before the Tuesday meeting.
25. At every regular meeting of the School Committee, the order of business will be set by policy BEDB.
26. At the first meeting each month of the School Committee the agenda will include a 'Good of the Order' following the Consent Agenda item. The purpose of this item is to allow the members to speak about the functioning of the School Committee with the intent of improvement.

27. The School Committee will follow the order of business as established by the agenda, except under a suspension of the rules to expedite School Committee business or to accommodate individuals appearing before the School Committee.
28. The agenda will include a listing of all recommendations being brought forward. The agenda also will include a listing of all resolutions, reports, and other communications and reports to the School Committee.
29. The agenda will be included in the Notice of Meeting.
30. Agenda for all regular meetings held by the School Committee will be available to the public and the press. Copies of the agenda will be filed with the Office of the Town Clerk and posted on the website of the School Committee no later than the Friday evening prior to the meeting.
31. Four members of the School Committee will constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. The chair, or in their absence, the vice-chair or designated individual, will call the meeting to order. In the absence of a quorum, the presiding officer, as the case may be, will cause the Superintendent to determine whether there are sufficient members in the meeting to provide a quorum. Should the answer be in the negative, the presiding officer will be required to rule “no quorum” and adjournment of the meeting will be taken without the transaction of any business, subject to further call in accordance with the rules of the School Committee.
32. All meetings of the School Committee, and any of its subcommittees, will be open to the public and press; however, the School Committee has the right to sit in an executive session, closed to the public and the press, when it meets the following procedural conditions imposed by state law:
  - a. The School Committee will first convene in an open session for which notice has been given.
  - b. The chair, or in their absence, the presiding member, will state the purpose for the executive session, stating all subjects that may be revealed without compromising the purpose for which the executive session was called.
  - c. The chair, or the presiding member, will state whether the School Committee will reconvene in open session after the executive session.
  - d. A majority of the members must vote to enter the executive session, with the vote taken by roll call and recorded in the official minutes.
  - e. The School Committee will enter executive session only to:
    - i. discuss the reputation, character, physical condition, or mental health rather than the professional competence of an individual, or to discuss the discipline or dismissal of, or complaints or charges brought against, a public officer, employee, staff member, or individual. The individual to be discussed in such executive session shall be notified in writing by the public body at least 48 hours prior to the proposed executive session; provided, however, that notification may be waived upon written agreement of the parties.
    - ii. conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel.
    - iii. discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares.
    - iv. discuss the deployment of security personnel or devices or strategies with respect thereto.
    - v. investigate charges of criminal misconduct or to discuss the filing of criminal

- complaints.
  - vi. consider the purchase, exchange, lease, or value of real property, if the chair declares that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the public body.
  - vii. comply with, or act under the authority of, any general or special law or federal grant-in-aid requirements.
  - viii. consider or interview applicants for employment or appointment by a preliminary screening committee if the chair declares that an open meeting will have a detrimental effect in obtaining qualified applicants; provided, however, that this clause shall not apply to any meeting, including meetings of a preliminary screening committee, to consider and interview applicants who have passed a prior preliminary screening.
  - ix. meet or confer with a mediator, as defined in MGL Chapter 233 Section 23C, with respect to any litigation or decision on any public business within its jurisdiction involving another party, group or body, provided that: (a) any decision to participate in mediation shall be made in open meeting session and the parties, issues involved and purpose of the mediation shall be disclosed; and (b) no action shall be taken by any public body with respect to those issues which are the subject of the mediation without deliberation and approval for such action at an open meeting session.
33. The presiding officer will preserve order in the meetings and decide all questions of order, subject to an appeal to the School Committee by any member, which appeal will be decided without debate.
34. Regular meetings will begin promptly at 7:00 PM. (assuming a quorum). No meeting of the School Committee will go beyond three hours. If the School Committee is still meeting three hours after commencement, the chair will ask if there is a motion to recess the meeting until a certain time or if there is a motion to extend the meeting. A motion to recess to a time certain requires a majority vote. A motion to continue the meeting requires a two-thirds vote.
35. Public comment will be limited to three (3) minutes per individual and will be limited to those matters not on the agenda. The chair will announce the time limit prior to the public comment period at every regular meeting. See policy [BEDH - Public Comment and Presentations of the Public](#) for the full language of this policy.
36. Public comment will not take place at roundtable meetings or at retreats of the School Committee, where no matter being discussed may be finally considered, in that no votes may be taken. Written comments will be accepted and made part of the record of the meeting. The opportunity for the public to comment on items discussed at roundtable meetings or at retreats will be at the regular or special meeting at which the item may be considered for action by the School Committee.
37. To promote efficient, orderly meetings and in keeping with Robert's Rules of Order, the chair will work to:
- a. Refer new matters that need further study or questioning to the Superintendent or any other subcommittee agreed upon by the School Committee and the Superintendent;
  - b. Repeat the motion on the floor to make sure all members know what is being discussed and/or voted;
  - c. Allow enough time after a main motion is introduced for members to bring in amendments and other types of motions as outlined in Robert's Rules of Order;
  - d. Call for a second, if one has not been heard, and announce failed motions and motions without a second so that it is clear that such motions have failed or do not have a second;
  - e. Promote a courteous and respectful tone throughout the meetings.

38. Members are reminded that the use of electronic devices during meetings for the purpose of communications of matters related to our meetings is not permitted. Our meetings are meetings in public, and all communications during our meeting time on related matters are public communications and subject to public records requests.
39. Debate on motions will be limited to five (5) minutes per member in the first round and two (2) minutes in the second round. The chair will keep time. The chair may change the amount of time allotted to each member and may elect to use a “round-robin” format to promote a more efficient debate. The chair will work to make sure comments are germane to the motions on the floor.
40. The names of members introducing motions and resolutions will be recorded in the School Committee records. Motions and resolutions will require a second, and no debate will be in order until the chair states the immediately pending question.
41. Motions to adjourn, to lay on the table or take from the table, and to close debate will be decided without debate unless unanimous consent of the School Committee is granted a member to speak. The motion to close debate will be put in this form, “Move the question?” The adoption of this question by a two-thirds vote or unanimous consent will end debate and bring the School Committee to a vote on pending amendments if there are any, and then upon the main question.
42. A motion to recess will always be in order, except when a member has the floor or a question has been put and not decided.
43. A motion to recess must include the duration of the recess as may occur for a short break or recess to a time certain when a meeting will be resumed, such as a future date for a meeting that cannot continue at this time.
44. A recess to a time certain creates a continuation of the current meeting and therefore, there is no adjournment.
45. A recess to a time certain requires that the date and time be identified during the meeting when it is offered and may occur after the motion has passed but not prior to recessing the meeting.
46. A meeting in recess to a time certain requires the chair to say, “This meeting is recessed to” and the date and time decided upon by the School Committee.
47. A motion to adjourn will always be in order, except when a member has the floor, or a question has been put and not decided.
48. A meeting is not adjourned at the conclusion of the voting but rather is adjourned when the chair says, “This meeting is adjourned.”
49. A motion to rescind is used to reconsider a decision adopted by the School Committee at any time other than the current meeting (when a motion to reconsider is appropriate). There is no time limit on when this motion may be made and any member regardless of how they voted on the original decision may offer this motion to rescind unless the decision has been executed. Any part of a prior decision that has not yet been executed may be rescinded.
  - a. To rescind something previously adopted by a majority vote, the motion must be placed on the agenda following rule 43.
  - b. The motion should include a description or reference to the decision in question. Another member then must second the motion. The chair restates the motion to rescind and asks for



debate. During debate, any member may propose amendments (changes that are greater than the scope of notice are not in order). After full debate, the vote is taken on rescinding the motion.

- c. If the original motion has been acted upon and that action cannot be undone, the motion cannot be rescinded. However, any unexecuted part could be rescinded or amended.
- d. For a complete description of the characteristics of the rescind/amend options of something previously adopted, see Robert's Rules of Order.

50. The motion to reconsider can be made by a member when they wish to ask the School Committee to revisit a previous decision made at the same meeting. Reconsider is most commonly applied to main motions, but some subsidiary and incidental motions are also subject to reconsideration. The exceptions and uses for the motion can get complicated. But to keep things simple, remember that an affirmative vote cannot be reconsidered if it has been partly carried out, or if in the nature of a contract, the party to the contract has already been notified.

The motion to reconsider is useful when the committee realizes that they might have made a decision without proper debate or if information is received later in the meeting that impacts an earlier decision.

The effect of the motion to reconsider, if adopted, is that debate resumes right where the board left off prior to its original vote. To prevent abuse by those who simply didn't like the outcome of a vote the motion to reconsider has three special characteristics:

- a. The motion can only be made by someone who voted on the prevailing side -- voted yes on a motion that passed or no on a motion that did not.
- b. The making of the motion can only be made at the same meeting the decision to be reconsidered was made.
- c. A motion to reconsider ranks higher than its original consideration. What this means is that a member can move to reconsider a vote at any time during a meeting, even when another issue is pending. However, since it would not be "in order" to consider a motion at that time the secretary is instructed to record the motion as made and seconded. The motion can then be "called up" for consideration at a later time in the meeting when it would be "in order." The "calling up" of a motion to reconsider can be done by any member and does not need a second since that already took place when the motion was originally made. This is useful since it may be necessary to let members know there is a desire to reconsider a decision even if it can't be taken up at that moment.
- d. To properly handle a motion to reconsider, a member who voted on the prevailing side is recognized by the chair and moves to reconsider the vote; any other member seconds the motion. The chair restates the motion "to reconsider" as pending and asks for debate. Once debate is over, members vote on the motion to reconsider. If the motion to reconsider passes, the original (reconsidered) motion is brought back before the assembly to be voted on again. If the motion to reconsider is lost, it is the only vote taken and business proceeds to the next item on the agenda. Only a majority vote is needed to adopt the motion.

51. The Superintendent will retain in their possession all papers upon which action has been taken by the School Committee at any meeting. Additionally, all documents and other exhibits used at any meeting must be retained.

52. A majority of the members present will suffice to pass any motion or resolution (except as otherwise defined), but motions calling for the appropriation or expenditure of money will require the affirmative vote of four (4) members.

53. The call of the roll will be taken on any question whenever a member will so request, when authorizing the spending of monies, or is required by law. The order of roll call will be alphabetical by the last name of the members, with the chair voting last.

54. The chair or the presiding officer in the absence of the chair will have the sole authority to rule on all questions of order subject to appeal by any member of the School Committee. The question will be, "Will the ruling of the Chair be sustained?" Such appeal, if seconded, will immediately be put to vote, without debate, save that the chair or the presiding officer in the absence of the chair will be permitted two (2) minutes in which to explain the ruling in question. An affirmative vote of the majority vote of those present will be required to reverse a ruling by the chair or the presiding officer in the absence of the chair.
55. The conduct of the meetings and business of the School Committee will be in accordance with the rules of parliamentary procedure as laid down in the most recently revised edition of Robert's Rules of Order, except as specifically provided elsewhere in these Rules of the School Committee or by law. In accordance with Robert's Rules of Order, the School Committee may suspend parliamentary rules of order by a two-thirds vote. The School Committee does not have the authority to suspend the Open Meeting Law.
56. The Superintendent will be present in person or via remote participation at all regular meetings of the School Committee, with the exception of illness, bereavement, or emergency
57. The Superintendent will give the members of the School Committee written notice of all meetings, call special meetings of the School Committee when requested to do so by the Chair, attend the meetings of the School Committee, record its votes and proceedings in a permanent record-keeping system. The Superintendent will ensure that there is an appointed custodian of records and this information will be posted on our website. The Superintendent will ensure that the Minutes are posted on the School Committee web page as soon as they have been approved by the School Committee.
58. The Superintendent will be the custodian of the School Committee's records and other papers and preserve files of communications and documents of the School Committee.
59. The Superintendent, as soon as possible following the certification of the biennial election of the School Committee, will contact any newly elected members to:
  - a. schedule onboarding activities
  - b. offer training
  - c. provide a copy of these rules
  - d. enroll the member with the Massachusetts Association of School Committees
  - e. perform CORI and other background checks

We agree to fulfill these commitments and to hold each other accountable if any of us fail to live up to them: