

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Regular, special and emergency meetings of the Islesboro School Committee are open to the public. The School Committee, as an elected representative body of the school department, wishes to provide the opportunity for citizens to express interests and concerns related to the matters under consideration by the School committee. The public is cordially invited to attend and participate as set forth in this policy.

The School Committee meetings are conducted for the purpose of carrying on the official business of the school department. The meetings are not public forum meetings (as town meetings), but are meetings which are held for the School Committee to do its business in public. The minutes of each public meeting will record the action taken and will show how the School Committee voted on each item presented for action. The minutes are open and available to the public during normal business hours in the Office of the Superintendent of Schools.

Orderly conduct of a meeting does not permit spontaneous discussion from the audience nor among School Committee members. Individuals or organizations desiring to make requests, presentations or proposals on matters before the School committee will be provided that opportunity.

Generally, public participation shall be limited to time periods just prior to the School Committee discussion of the agenda items upon which citizens wish to comment.

The intent of this policy is to allow a fair and adequate opportunity for the public to be heard, to provide adequate time for the School Committee to obtain necessary information on a subject before it, and to see that the time allowed for open discussion does not interfere with the fulfillment of the scheduled agenda of the School Committee.

In order that the School Committee may fairly and adequately discharge its overall responsibility, a member of the public wishing to address the School Committee on a specific topic not otherwise on the agenda should submit such a request in writing to the Superintendent at least one full week in advance of the scheduled meeting. The Superintendent and / or School Committee Chair may add the item to the agenda at their discretion, or the Chair may waive this requirement.

An agenda shall be published in advance of each meeting in accordance with School Committee policy. Copies are to be posted or available for at least one week prior to regular meeting. Anyone desiring additional information about any item on the agenda should direct such inquiries to the Office of the Superintendent.

The Following “ground rules” are to further guide public participation at meetings:

1. The Chair may limit the time given to comments on a particular topic as well as the time any individual may speak.

Public Participation at Committee Meetings (cont.)

2. In the event of a sizeable audience, the Chair may require persons interested in speaking to do so, indicate by signing up to speak, so they may be called on in the most expedient order.
3. Citizens, employees and others with a legitimate interest in the School Committee's business are welcome to participate as provided in this policy. Others may be recognized to speak at the School Committee's discretion. Employees or employee groups will not be permitted to discuss matters for which other, more appropriate forums are provided.
4. All speakers are to identify themselves as they begin talking. They will not be permitted to participate in gossip, make defamatory comments, or use abusive or vulgar language. The School committee Chair will maintain the prerogative to discontinue any presentation which violates any of the public participation guidelines.
5. All speakers are to address the School Committee chair and may direct questions or comments to School Committee members or other officers of the school system only upon approval of the Chair. Members of the School Committee and the Superintendent have the privilege of asking questions of any person who addresses the School Committee. Such questions must be addressed through the Chair.
6. Comments and suggestions will be welcomed and given consideration by the School Committee. Speakers may offer objective comments on school operations and programs that concern them. Generally, the School Committee may hear but not discuss or act on an item not on the agenda. Personal matters or complaints will not be entertained in a public meeting but will be deferred to established resolution procedures. Questions and concerns will be responded to through appropriate channels.
7. No complaints or allegations will be allowed concerning any personnel or any person connected to the school system. If appropriate, concerns about an individual will be handled in a conference where the rights and interests of all parties will be appropriately regarded.
8. Generally, duplication or repetition of comments to School committee should be avoided in order to make the most efficient use of the time in meetings. Groups or organizations are requested to be represented by designated spokespersons.

Revised: February 11, 1999