

EPHRATA AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

SECTION: COMMUNITY

TITLE: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN
BOARD MEETINGS

ADOPTED: December 17, 2007

REVISED: November 15, 2021

903. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN BOARD MEETINGS	
1. Purpose	The Board recognizes the value to school governance of public comment on educational issues and the importance of involving members of the public in Board meetings. The Board also recognizes its responsibility for proper governance of the district and the need to conduct its business in an orderly and efficient manner.
2. Authority 65 Pa. C.S.A. 710 65 Pa. C.S.A. 710.1, 712.1 65 Pa. C.S.A. 710.1 65 Pa. C.S.A. 710.1, 712.1	<p>The Board adopts this policy to govern public participation in Board meetings necessary to conduct its meeting and to maintain order.</p> <p>In order to permit fair and orderly expression of public comment, the Board shall provide an opportunity at each open meeting of the Board for residents and taxpayers to comment on matters of concern, official action or deliberation before the Board prior to official action by the Board.</p> <p>The Board shall require that all public comments be made at the beginning of each meeting. If the Board determines that there is ample time for additional comments, it may be included prior to adjournment.</p> <p>If the Board determines there is not sufficient time at a meeting for public comments, the comment period may be deferred to the next regular meeting or to a special meeting occurring before the next regular meeting.</p> <p>When an item is added to the agenda after the public comment period has ended, the Board shall offer a further public comment opportunity limited to the added item(s).</p>
3. Delegation of Responsibility 24 P.S. 407 Pol. 006	The presiding officer at each open Board meeting shall follow Board policy for the conduct of open meetings. Where the presiding officer's ruling is disputed, it may be overruled by a majority of those school directors present and voting.
4. Guidelines	<p>Whenever issues identified by the participant are subject to remediation under policies and procedures of the Board, they shall be dealt with in accordance with those policies and procedures and the organizational structure of the district.</p> <p>The Board requires that public participants be residents or taxpayers of this district</p>

or anyone representing a group in the community or school district, any representative of a firm eligible to bid on materials or services solicited by the Board, any district employee, or any district student.

Any individual or group wishing to address the Board shall file with the Board President or Superintendent a request to be placed on the agenda at least five (5) days prior to a meeting. Specific information regarding the nature of the petition to the Board shall include the following in the written request:

1. Name and address of the individual making the request.
2. Organization or group represented, if any.
3. Content of the information to be presented; if written material is to be passed out, a copy of the material must accompany the request.
4. Specific questions to be asked or specific action desired of the Board.

If a group wishes to participate, a spokesperson for the group shall be designated in advance.

The Superintendent shall respond in writing or by telephone to any individual or group making a request, informing them of the date of the meeting at which presentation may be made and the place assigned on the agenda.

Participants must be recognized by the presiding officer and must preface their comments by an announcement of their name, address, and group affiliation if applicable.

Comments shall be limited to no more than five (5) minutes duration.

The presiding officer may limit repetitive comments.

An individual's or group's right to comment is for purposes of addressing the Board, not for purposes of asking questions of Board members or persons employed by the district. The presiding officer shall remind individuals and groups of this policy and shall request that Board members and persons employed by the district not engage in debate at the public meeting with any individual or group.

The following will not be permitted:

1. Personnel matters.
2. Comments about matters which are not properly discussed at a public meeting (for example, comments about specific students).

	<p>3. Vulgar, abusive, obscene or profane language.</p> <p>The presiding officer may:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Interrupt or terminate a participant's statement when the statement is too lengthy, personally directed, abusive, obscene, or irrelevant.2. Request any individual to leave the meeting when that person does not observe reasonable decorum.3. Request the assistance of law enforcement officers to remove a disorderly person when the person's conduct interferes with the orderly progress of the meeting.4. Call a recess or adjourn to another time when the lack of public decorum interferes with the orderly conduct of the meeting.5. Waive these rules with the approval of the Board.
65 Pa. C.S.A. 711	<p>Electronic recording devices and cameras, in addition to those used as official recording devices, shall be permitted at open meetings under guidelines established by the Board. If such devices interfere with the conduct of business, the presiding officer may ask for their removal or place reasonable limitations on their use.</p> <p>No placards or banners will be permitted within the meeting room.</p>
65 Pa. C.S.A. 709	<p>The meeting agenda and all pertinent documents shall be available to the press and public at the meetings.</p> <p>References:</p> <p>School Code – 24 P.S. Sec. 407</p> <p>Sunshine Act – 65 Pa. C.S.A. Sec. 701 et seq., 709, 710, 710.1, 711, 712.1</p> <p>Board Policy – 006, 906</p>