

**Policy 213: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN BOARD MEETINGS**

**Status:** ADOPTED

**Original Adopted Date:** 01/20/1986 | **Last Revised Date:** 02/21/2022 | **Last Reviewed Date:** 02/21/2022

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN BOARD MEETINGS**

The Mason City Community School District Board of Education welcomes citizen interest in and concerns for the schools. Accordingly, the public is invited to attend all sessions of the Board. Matters concerning an individual school will be discussed first with the principal of that school. If the problem cannot then be resolved at the school level, it will be brought to the attention of the Superintendent prior to submission to the Board of Education. (See Board Policy 213.1) Citizens may address the Board at regular meetings in two ways: during the Open Forum and through the Public Comments. The board has a significant interest in maintaining the decorum of its meetings, and it is expected that members of the public and the board will address each other with civility. The orderly process of the board meeting will not be interfered with or disrupted by the Open Forum or Public Comments. Only those speakers recognized by the Board President will be allowed to speak. Comments by others are out of order. If disruptive, the individual causing disruption may be asked to leave the board meeting. Defamatory comments may be subject to legal action.

Petitions to Place a Topic on the Agenda

Individuals who wish for an item to be placed on the board agenda may submit a valid petition to the board. For a petition to be valid, it must be signed by at least 500 eligible electors of the district, or ten percent of the individuals who voted in the last school election, whichever number is lower.

Upon receiving a valid petition to the board to place a proposal on the next board agenda for public hearing, the board will place the proposal identified in the petition on the agenda of the next regular meeting, or a special meeting held within 30 days of receipt of the petition. The board will provide a sign-up sheet for all individuals who wish to speak on the proposal, and individuals will be called to speak in order of sign-up. The sign-up sheet will require each individual to list their legal name and mailing address. Each speaker will be limited to an amount of time established by the board president that is reasonable and necessary based on the number of speakers signed up. The same time limit will apply to all speakers on the proposal. Each individual will be limited to one opportunity to speak. The board maintains absolute discretion on whether or not to discuss or act on the public comments made on the proposal. If a petition is related to curriculum, the district maintains discretion to determine whether to stop teaching that curriculum until the board holds the public hearing to discuss the curriculum.

Open Forum

The Board of Education provides an opportunity for interested patrons of the school district to address the Board of Education on an agenda item during the Open Forum of a regular Board of Education meeting. Public comment shall be limited to those individuals with direct ties or relationships to the district, including residents and/or taxpayers of the district, personnel, staff or vendors who work or contract to do business for or with the district (regardless of their residence) or families from outside the district who open enroll their children into the district. The Board, in its sole discretion, may elect to allow someone outside of these identified categories to speak to the Board, however, in electing to do so, the district is not establishing any precedent or past practice for any future approvals. In order to address the Board of Education on an agenda item, the patron must fulfill the following qualifications:

1. Notify the Board of Education President, Superintendent of Schools or Recording Secretary prior to the onset of the regular Board of Education meeting that the patron wishes to address the Board during the Open Forum, by completing the Open Forum Request Form.
2. Identify himself or herself by name and place of residency in the school district.
3. State the agenda item on which he/she wishes to address the Board.

The patron addressing the Board during the Open Forum will be accorded five minutes of speaking time. An extension of allotted speaking time must be approved by a majority vote of the Board of Education.

The board has the discretion to limit the amount of time set aside for public participation. Normally, speakers will be limited to five (5) minutes with a total allotted time for public participation of twenty (20) minutes. However, the board president may modify this time limit, if deemed appropriate or necessary. Public comment is a time set aside for community input, but the board will not discuss or take any action on any matter during public comment.

Public comments shall be limited to regular board meetings and will not be routinely held during special board meetings.

### Public Comment

The Board of Education provides an opportunity for interested patrons of the school district to address the Board of Education on non-agenda items during the Public Comments immediately following adjournment of a regular Board of Education meeting. In order to address the Board of Education on a non-agenda item, the patron must fulfill the following qualifications:

1. Notify the Board of Education President, Superintendent of Schools or Recording Secretary prior to the onset of the regular Board of Education meeting that the patron wishes to address the Board during Public Comment, by completing the Public Comment Request Form.
2. Identify himself or herself by name and place of residency in the school district, or if nonresident their relationship to the school district.
3. State the subject on which he/she wishes to address the Board.

The patron addressing the Board during Public Comment will be accorded five minutes of speaking time. An extension of allotted speaking time must be approved by a majority agreement of the Board of Education.

The time limit set for the Public Comments portion of the regular Board of Education meeting will be twenty minutes. The order in which patrons submit their intent to address the Board will be the same order in which the Board hears their comments. The twenty-minute time limit for the Public Comments portion of the meeting may be extended by a majority agreement of the Board.

The Board of Education will not take action on matters presented by patrons in the Open Forum or during Public Comment. The Board of Education may, however, request that issues raised in the Open Forum -or during Public Comment be researched by the school district's administrative staff and placed on a future special or regular Board of Education meeting agenda.

#### Legal Reference:

Iowa Code §§ 21; 22; 279.8, 279.8B

#### Cross Reference:

205 -- Board Member Liability

210.8 -- Board Meeting Agenda

214 -- Public Hearings

307 -- Communication Channels

401.4 -- Employee Complaints

402.5 -- Public Complaints About Employees

502.4 -- Student Complaints and Grievances

Approved: 01-20-86

Reviewed: 1987, 1991, 1995, 2003, 2009, 2015, 2019, 10-19-20, 08-02-21, 02-21-22

Revised: 05-18-92, 10-16-95, 08-18-03, 08-17-09, 05-18-15, 05-20-19, 08-02-21, 02-21-22

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