

Missoula County Public Schools

Board of Trustees 1441

Audience Participation During Regular Meetings, Special Meetings/Work Sessions/Committee Meetings

The Board of Trustees recognizes the value of public comment on educational issues and the importance of involving members of the public in Board meetings. The Board also recognizes the public's statutory and constitutional right to participate in governmental operations. In order to permit fair and orderly expression of such comment, the Board will provide a period of time during regular meetings in which the public may make comment. Public Comment will be allocated (3 minutes per speaker) provided the speakers contact administration in advance of the meeting, according to policy, for topics that do not relate to the stated business of the Board meeting. At the time of request to address the Board, persons must state their purpose which will be included in the agenda. Public Comment will also be allocated for comment specific to an item on the agenda. Three (3) minutes will be allowed per speaker. These speakers do not have to be pre-scheduled for the agenda but are to sign in at a place designated prior to the meeting and state their purpose. The Chair may control public comment to ensure an orderly progression of the meeting and allow for public comment. The Chair may also close off public comment not pertinent to the agenda as noticed.

The Public Comment portion of the meeting is set aside as time for the public to address the Board as a body. It is not a time for Board response to public comments or for the public to ask questions of individual Board members. Because the public comment period is not a time for debate, individual Board members may only ask clarifying questions as to the points made and may only do so through the chair.

The Board will also allow individuals to express an opinion prior to Board action on agenda items. However, the Board Chair has the prerogative to set the time allocated for additional public comment pertinent to the action of the Board. Individuals wishing to be heard by the Board shall first be recognized by the Chair. Individuals, after identifying themselves, will proceed to make comments within the three minute time period and comments will be respectful. Any representative of a firm eligible to bid on materials or services solicited by the Board shall also be entitled to express an opinion.

Each speaker, prior to addressing the Board, must identify him/herself. The Chair may interrupt or terminate an individual's statements if deemed necessary, that is, if statements are out of order, too lengthy, personally directed, abusive, obscene or irrelevant. The Board as a whole shall have the final decision in determining the appropriateness of all such rulings. If the subject matter of the agenda item involves a matter of individual privacy which clearly exceeds the merits of public disclosure, the Board Chair shall receive comments from individuals in executive session. However, the person(s) about whom an individual is speaking does have a right to be present in either open or closed session to hear the comments.

Special meetings, work sessions, and committee meetings of the Board may have provision for public comment pertinent to the nature of the agenda. From time to time, meetings, work session, or committee meetings will not provide for public comment, dependent on the work needs of the Board. However, at a point prior to final action of the Board, time for public comment will be provided. As agendas are set, time limits for public comment, when taken, will also be set. All public comment shall be limited to three minutes per speaker. All persons wishing to address the Board on matters not on any agendas as business of the Board must call in advance, according to policy, and state purpose to be placed on the agenda. All individuals making comment to the Board are to be recognized

by the Chair, are to identify themselves, be brief and respectful. The Chair may control public comment to ensure an orderly progression of the meeting and may also close off public comment not pertinent to the agenda as noticed.

No employee or citizen complaint, brought forward in Public Comment, shall be acted upon at a meeting of the Board of Trustees unless the matter has been pursued through the appropriate grievance/complaint process.

Legal Reference:

Article II, Section 8, Montana Constitution

Article II, Section 10, Right of Privacy

2-3-101, et seq., MCA, Right of Participation

Policy History:

Adopted on: October 8, 1996

Revised on: March 14, 2000