

## **RSU #63**

- a. NEPN/NSBA Code:** **BEDH**
- b. Title:** **Public Participation at Meetings**
- c. Author:**
- d. Replaces Policy:**
- e. Date Approved:** **01/25/2021 RSU #63**
- f. Previously Approved:** **01/27/2014**
- g. Policy Expiration:** **Review as Needed**
- h. Responsible for Review:** **Superintendent/Board of Directors/Policy Committee**
- i. Date Reviewed:** **12/28/2020 Superintendent**  
**01/13/2021 Policy Committee**
- j. References:** **1 MRSA par. 401 et. Seq.**
- k. Narrative:**

Board meetings are conducted for the purpose of carrying on the official business of the school system. All meetings of the RSU 63 Board of Directors (the Board) are open to the public. The public is cordially invited to attend and participate in Board meetings as provided in this policy. This policy applies only to meetings of the full Board, not to meetings of Board subcommittees.

Although Board meetings are not public forums, the Board will provide appropriate opportunities at its meetings for members of the public to express opinions and concerns related to the matters concerning education and RSU #63 schools. The intent is to allow a fair and adequate opportunity for the public to be heard while ensuring that the time allowed for public discussion does not interfere with the fulfillment of the scheduled agenda.

Regular, special, and emergency meetings of the Board are open to the public. The Board, as the elected representative body of RSU #63 (the District) wishes to provide an opportunity for citizens to raise questions, and to express interests and/or concerns related to their district. The Boards cordially invites the public to attend and participate in the Board meetings as set forth in this policy.

- I.** The Board conducts meetings for the purpose of carrying on the District's official business. Board meetings are not public forums, but, rather, conducted to do the district's business in public. The public may attend all meetings except employee contract negotiations and executive sessions. The Minutes of each public meeting record the actions taken and show how individual members of the respective Board voted on each item presented for action. In accordance with the law, Minutes are open and available for public review during normal business hours at the Superintendent's office. RSU #63 Minutes are also posted on the district website.
- II.** While the Board encourages public comments, the orderly conduct of a meeting does not permit spontaneous discussion from members of the public present nor among Board members.

- III.** Individuals or groups desiring additional information about any item on the agenda should direct inquiries to the Superintendent. Appropriate response will be initiated by the Superintendent or by their designee.
- IV.** The agenda for each regular Board meeting will include one or more items titled: “Questions and Comments from the Public.” The purpose is to permit members of the public to speak, within reasonable time limitations, on matters of immediate concern within the jurisdiction of the Board. The Board Chairperson may limit the amount of time available for discussion to ten (10) minutes if there is a long agenda. If this is needed, the Chairperson will so advise the Board and the public in attendance at the beginning of the “Questions and Comments from the Public” agenda item. During the time allotted for public participation, members of the public may speak on any subject directly related to the operations of the schools, except for personal matters or complaints concerning specific employees or students, which will be addressed through established policies and procedures. In the event of a sizeable audience, the Chair may require persons interested in speaking to sign up so they may be called on in a fair and efficient manner.
- V.** General rules for speaker presentations within “Questions and Comments from the Public” agenda items are as follows:
  - A.** Citizens and employees of the school unit are welcome to participate as provided in this policy. Others may be recognized to speak at the Chair’s discretion. Individual employees and/or employee groups will not be permitted to discuss matters for which complaint or grievance procedures are provided.
  - B.** During the time set aside for public participation, the Chair will be responsible for recognizing all speakers, who must identify themselves by name and their community of residence when they begin speaking.
  - C.** Speakers should limit their comments to three (3) minutes speaking time.
  - D.** Speakers will not participate in gossip, make defamatory comments, or use abusive or vulgar language.
  - E.** Speakers should limit their comments to items that directly relate to the District.
  - F.** The Board Chairperson will maintain the prerogative to discontinue any presentation that violates any of the public participation guidelines.
  - G.** If several people wish to speak on the same topic, the Board Chairperson may request that a single spokesperson be selected by groups or organizations speak to the Board on the topic to avoid repetitious information. All speakers are to address the Chair and direct questions or comments to particular Board members or the Superintendent only with approval of the Chair. Requests for information or concerns that require further research may be referred to the Superintendent to be addressed at a later time.
  - H.** With the approval of the Board Chairperson, questions or comments may be directed to specific Board members or officers of the district. Board members and the

Superintendent may have the privilege of asking questions of any person who addresses the Board.

- I.** In order to avoid contention and personal arguments between the Board, or individual members of the Board, with members of the public, challenges by members of the public regarding decisions or actions taken by the Board on any particular issue will not be debated in public. If the Board Chairperson chooses, he/she may state that the item will be taken under consideration to allow Board members to think further on the issue. Members of the Board and the Superintendent may ask questions of any person who addresses the Board but are expected to refrain from arguing or debating issues. Questions must be addressed through the Chair.
  - J.** Unless an item is posted on the agenda, discussion and action may be inappropriate. No complaints or allegations will be allowed at Board meetings concerning any person employed by the school system or against particular students. Personal matters or complaints concerning student or staff issues will not be considered in a public meeting but will be referred through established policies and procedures.
  - K.** If a personnel issue is not satisfactorily resolved by the Superintendent, the complaint can be filed in writing by the party or parties in question and sent to the attention of the Board Chairperson where it may be scheduled for discussion within an executive session.
- VI.** Individuals or organizations desiring to make requests, presentations, or proposals for consideration by the Board will have that opportunity. However, in order for the Board to discharge its responsibilities fairly and adequately, citizens desiring to address the Board on a topic not otherwise on the agenda are urged to submit a request in writing to the Superintendent or Board Chairperson no later than 5:00pm on the ninth working day prior to a scheduled Board meeting. That request should state the name of the individual or group submitting the request, a contact telephone number and address, the purpose of the request, and the topic to be addressed. The Superintendent or Board Chairperson may add the item at his/her discretion.
  - A.** The Superintendent will confer with the Board Chairperson concerning approval to place the requested item on the agenda, and to determine the appropriate meeting for that to occur.
  - B.** Presenters may be scheduled by the Superintendent to address subjects that are already on the agenda.
  - C.** Presenters will be introduced by the Board Chairperson at the appropriate time during the agenda.
  - D.** Initial presentations by speakers are limited to five (5) minutes, although the Board of Directors may wish to extend the time allocated or through discussion.

- VII.** The overall intent of this policy is to allow: a fair and adequate opportunity for the public to be heard, to allow the Superintendent to take action when policies have been established by the Boards on the subject of a request, to provide adequate time for the Boards to obtain necessary information concerning a subject, and to see that time devoted to the discussion does not interfere with the fulfillment of the scheduled agenda of the Board at any particular meeting.
- VIII.** Opportunity for public participation at Board subcommittee meetings is not required but may be permitted at the discretion of the subcommittee chair.