

## **SURRY SCHOOL BOARD POLICY**

### **Policy BEDH: Public Comment & Participation at School Board Meetings**

#### **A. General Meeting Policy**

Meetings of the Board shall be open to the public. The Surry School Board encourages residents to attend Board meetings so that they may become acquainted with the operation and services of the Surry School District.

The Surry School Board does not operate any schools and is recognized as a sending district. Students and their families are required to comply with applicable policies and procedures adopted by the school districts of the schools they are attending. Questions about the receiving district's policies, procedures, and operations should be addressed first to administrators at the receiving district.

This policy sets forth the standards and meeting rules that apply to the public in attendance at Board meetings, and to the opportunity for the public to provide comment at Board meetings. The Board will provide opportunity for members of the public to provide input and comment at Board meetings consistent with the meeting and participation rules as described below.

#### **B. Opportunity for Public Comment**

Consistent with RSA 189:74, the Board will provide the opportunity for members of the public to comment on school district matters at all Board meetings except for emergency meetings called under RSA 91-A:2, II, or at meetings for which the purpose is to address one or more issues in non-public session under RSA 91-A:3.

In order to assure that persons who wish to appear before the Board may be heard and, at the same time, assure that the Board may conduct its business and meetings properly and efficiently, the Board adopts as policy the following procedures and rules pertaining to public participation at Board meetings.

1. Members of the public shall speak when recognized by the Board chair or other person presiding over the meeting.
2. When required by RSA 189:74, the Board will provide a minimum of thirty minutes to hear public comment. This period may be extended by a majority vote of the Board. The Board may include additional public comment periods for specific agenda items with a time limit for public comment specified on the pertinent agenda. If speakers do not fill the minimum 30-minute public comment period, the Board may move to table the remainder of the time until the end of the meeting or later in the meeting.
3. Speakers are requested to sign up prior to the meeting for the public comment period. Pre-registration is not required, however, speakers will be recognized on a first-come basis, using the list as the starting point. If a person declines to speak or is not present when called, the Chair will move to the next name on the list. Individual speakers will be allotted three minutes per person. Speakers may not relinquish allotted time to another speaker. The Board may at the outset of the public comment period increase or decrease the individual time limit for all speakers.
4. In order to comply with the official minute requirements of RSA 91-A:2, II., speakers shall state their name and address for the record.
5. During the public comment, an individual may offer comments on agenda items or upon other District matters and other issues directly relating to district policies and operations.
6. Consistent with RSA 189:74, I, and in the interest of protecting personally identifiable information as well as other confidential information, comments regarding individual students, volunteers, or employees (other than the Superintendent) should be directed to the

Superintendent outside of the Board meeting or as provided under the complaint/grievance processes set forth in School Board policy KEB.

7. Defamatory statements, comments threatening bodily harm, or other unprotected speech will not be tolerated.
8. Comments which do not adhere to the above provisions or which disrupt the official business of the Board, may be ruled out of order by the Chair. Repeated violations may result in the Chair terminating the speaker's privilege of address and possible deeming the violations a disruption to be treated as outlined in section C below.
9. Persons appearing before the Board are reminded that the public comment period is an opportunity for members of the public to provide their input to the Board but is not a question-and-answer session.
10. Board members are without authority to answer spontaneously on behalf of the Board. Thus, in most instances, Board response, if any, will be deferred pending considerations by the full Board.
11. In addition to the opportunity to offer input during the public comment period of a Board meeting, members of the public may also request initiatives or other such items to be placed on the Board's agenda. The determination whether or not to include the matter on a Board agenda will be made consistent with Board policy BEDB. Requests to have a matter placed on an agenda should be presented in writing to the Superintendent no less than fourteen days prior to the next Board meeting and must set forth the specifics of the subject to be addressed.

### C. Meeting Disruptions

The primary purpose of School Board meetings is to conduct the business of the Board as it relates to school policies and operations. While members of the public have the right to attend and offer input during the public comment period of meetings, they do not have the right to disrupt them.

Impermissible disruptions include but are not limited to shouting or speaking while someone else had been recognized by the Chair, refusing to terminate public comment after that speaker's time has expired, any other sustained or intentionally loud noises after the Chair had called for order; or any other conduct intended to disrupt the meeting or person speaking.

If, after at least two warnings from the Chair, an individual continues to disrupt the meeting by words or actions, the Chair may direct the person to leave the meeting. Upon refusal, the Chair may request assistance from law enforcement officials to have the individual removed, with the potential for criminal charges. Interruptions may result in a recess or provided the thirty minutes for public comment has expired, an adjournment of the meeting.

All meeting participants are expected to demonstrate civility through courtesy, politeness, and a general awareness of the rights, wishes, concerns, and feelings of others.

First Reading: 1/20/2025

Second Reading: 2/17/2025

Adoption: 2/17/2025

Legal References: U.S. Const., 1st Amendment  
RSA 91-A:2, Meetings Open to the Public  
RSA 91-A:3, Non-Public Sessions  
RSA 189:65, VII & VII-a-Definitions  
RSA 189:74, School Board Public Comment Period  
RSA 644:2, Disturbing the Peace