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PUBLIC COMMENT AT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETINGS

All regular and special meetings of the Westfield School Committee shall be open to the public. Executive sessions will be held only as prescribed by the Statutes of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

The Westfield School Committee desires individuals to attend its meetings so that they may become better acquainted with the operations and the programs of the Westfield Public Schools. In addition, the Westfield School Committee would welcome the opportunity to hear the wishes and ideas of the public.

Public comment is not a discussion, debate, or dialogue between individuals and the Westfield School Committee. It is an individual's opportunity to express an opinion on issues within the Westfield School Committee's authority.

To ensure the ability of the Westfield School Committee to conduct District's business in an orderly manner, the following rules and procedures are adopted:

1. At the start of each regularly scheduled Westfield School Committee meeting, individuals will sign in for an opportunity to speak during public comment. The Chair shall determine the length of the public participation segment. The public comment section shall not exceed 30 minutes. All speakers are encouraged to present their remarks in a respectful manner.

2. Speakers will be allowed up to three (3) minutes to present their material and must begin their comments by stating their name and city/town. The presiding Chair may permit extension of this time limit, in extenuating circumstances.

3. Topics for discussion shall be limited to those items within the Westfield School Committee's scope of authority. The authority of the Westfield School Committee primarily concerns the review and approval of the budget of the district's public schools, the performance of the Superintendent, and the educational goals and policies of the district's public schools. Comments and complaints regarding school personnel (apart from the Superintendent) or students are prohibited. In the event the School Committee decides to hear such a complaint, the provisions of the Open Meeting Laws are to be followed (e.g. advanced notice, right to counsel, right to have the complaint heard in executive session).

4. The Chair of the meeting, after a warning, reserves the right to terminate speech which is not constitutionally protected because it constitutes true threats that are likely to provoke a violent reaction and/or cause a breach of the peace, or incitement to imminent lawless conduct, contains obscenities, is a complaint as referenced in section 3 above, or is otherwise legally inappropriate for a public meeting.

5. Written comments longer than three (3) minutes may be presented to the presiding Chair before or after the meeting. All remarks will be addressed through the Chair of the meeting. Comments made during the public portion of the meeting do not necessarily reflect the views or positions of the Westfield School Committee.

6. Sign up instructions will be provided for those who wish to participate in Public Comment.

Source: MASC July 2016
Adopted: October 12, 1978
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