

## **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

The School Committee welcomes everyone to their meetings. All regular and special meetings of the School Committee shall be open to the public and shall conform to the Open Meeting Law. Executive sessions are closed to the public and will be held only as prescribed by the statutes of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. We are your elected officials. The New Salem/Wendell School Committee serves as a representative for the community that includes students, their families, residents of New Salem and Wendell, and the staff at school. The School Committee believes that community participation is important and vital to its understanding of the programs and operations of our schools and for the health of the educational community. Therefore, we will take steps to inform and to listen.

During its meetings, we will strive to find a balance between hearing from members of the community and conducting the required business. In order to achieve this, the following rules and procedures are established for School Committee meetings:

1. At the start of each regularly scheduled School Committee meeting, individuals, or group representatives will be invited to address the Committee during the Public Comment period. Public Hearing is the time for the public to bring up something not already on the agenda. In general, it is a time for us to listen, to acknowledge, to clarify, and, possibly, to direct your concern/issue to the appropriate place. It is not a time for lengthy discussion. The Chairperson will determine the length of the Public Comment period given the urgency and relevancy of the items raised, the number of other speakers and the length of items on the agenda. The Chairperson, in conjunction with the Committee, will determine an appropriate time to revisit the concerns/issues raised by the public.
2. The Chairperson of the School Committee shall preside over the meeting. In this role, s/he will acknowledge speakers from the public. S/he will determine the length of time for public participation and ensure that comments are appropriate. During any part of the meeting, the public may be recognized by the Chairperson to speak on an item before the Committee. All remarks will be addressed through the Chairperson of the meeting rather than directly to other participants.
3. Comments made by anyone at the meeting should at all times be respectful. If a speaker persists in improper conduct or remarks, the Chairperson may rescind the individual's right to address the committee. Defamatory or abusive remarks are always out of order.
4. Speakers may offer such objective criticisms of the school operations and programs as concern them, but in public session the Committee will not hear personal complaints of school personnel, students or any member of the school community. Under most circumstances, administrative channels are the proper means for disposition of legitimate complaints involving staff members.
5. The School Committee will provide information to the public at the meeting to help them participate in an informed manner. This will include providing copies of the agenda and materials to be discussed. Since not all materials are easily reproduced and public attendance will vary, the number of documents provided for the public should be reasonable. Minutes of the meetings shall be maintained as required and available to the public. Again, welcome.

First reading: 01-04-07

Second reading, first vote: 02-01-07

Final vote: 03-01-07