

## **DRAFT**

### PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETINGS

All regular and special meetings of the 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 School Committee desires members of the Shrewsbury community to attend its meetings so that they may become better acquainted with the operations and the programs of the Shrewsbury Public Schools. In addition, the Committee would like the opportunity to hear the wishes and ideas of members of the Shrewsbury community on matters within the scope of their authority. These matters include the school district's budget, the performance of the Superintendent, and the educational goals and policies of the Shrewsbury Public Schools.

In order that all members of the community who wish to be heard before the Committee have a chance and to ensure the ability of the Committee to conduct the District's business in an orderly manner, the following rules and procedures are adopted consistent with state and federal free speech laws:

1. At the commencement of each regularly scheduled School Committee meeting, any individual or group representative will be invited to address the Committee. The length of the public participation segment shall be no longer than fifteen (15) minutes unless otherwise determined by the Chairperson. Prior to the beginning of the meeting, speakers should give their names and the issues they wish to discuss to the School Committee Chairperson who will recognize them in the same order as submitted.
2. All speakers are encouraged to present their remarks in a respectful manner.
3. Speakers must begin their remarks by stating their name, town or city of residence, and affiliation. All remarks will be addressed through the Chair of the meeting.
4. Public participation shall concern items that are within the scope of the School Committee's authority. Therefore, any comments involving staff members or students must concern the educational goals, policies, or budget of the Shrewsbury Public Schools, or the performance of the Superintendent.
5. Assuming that four (4) or fewer speakers sign up to engage in public comment, each speaker will be allowed three (3) minutes each to present their material. If five (5) or more speakers sign up to engage in public comment, then each speaker will be allowed two (2) minutes each to present their material. No more than six (6) speakers will be accommodated at any individual meeting.

6. Large groups addressing the same topic are encouraged to consolidate their remarks and/or select a spokesperson to comment during public participation.
7. Speakers may not assign their time to another speaker, and in general, extensions of time will not be permitted. However, speakers who require reasonable accommodations on the basis of a speech-related disability or who require language interpretation services may be allotted a total of five (5) minutes to present their material. Speakers must notify the School Committee Chair by telephone or email at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting if they wish to request an extension of time for one of these reasons.
8. The Chair reserves the right to terminate speech which is not Constitutionally protected because it constitutes true threats, incitement to imminent lawless conduct, comments that were found by a court of law to be defamatory, and/or sexually explicit comments made to appeal to prurient interests. Verbal comments will also be curtailed once they exceed the time limits outlined in paragraphs 5 and 7 of this policy and/or to the extent they exceed the scope of the School Committee's authority.
9. Written comments may be presented to the School Committee before or after the meeting for the Committee members review and consideration at an appropriate time.
10. Public participation is not a time for debate or response to comments by the School Committee. Comments made during public participation do not reflect the views or the positions of the School Committee. The constitutional free speech rights of participants in public participation will be respected.