

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS

Members of the publiccommunity, including students enrolled in the division, are invited and encouraged to attend meetings of the Albemarle County School Board (“Board”) to observe its deliberations. The Board shall set aside up to 40 minutes for Public Comment Time at the beginning of each business meeting. Any individual, including a student,member-of-the community may sign up prior to the start of the meeting to address the Board on matters related to Albemarle County Public Schools not already scheduled for a public hearing on the day of the meeting. The Board will receive comment provided speakers refrain from the use of obscenity, ad hominem attacks, or other speech tending to create a breach of peace; and provided further that no individual member of the public shall be permitted to address the Board for more than three (3) minutes. If more than 13 individuals sign up to speak during Public Comment Time, each speaker shall only be allotted two (2) minutes to speak. If more than 20 speakers sign up to speak, 20 speakers will be selected by lots from those signed up to speak.

The Chair is vested with the Board’s authority to enforce these limitations. The Board in their majority may make amendments to these limitations as they deem necessary for the management of School Board business.

Rules of Decorum

Public comment shall be addressed to the School Board as a body. Speakers may refer to individual Board members, Division leaders, or staff when the comments relate to official actions, decisions, or matters within the authority of the School Board or the operation of the School Division. Public comment is not a forum for debate or for questions directed to individual Board members or staff. Speakers shall not make threats, use obscenity or profane language, disclose confidential student information or private personal matters, or engage in conduct that disrupts the orderly conduct of the meeting. School Board members shall not respond to nor engage with speakers during public comment.

Board members shall maintain decorum in order to expedite the business before the Board. Questions and remarks shall be limited to the business before the Board. School Board members shall address all remarks to the presiding officer. For all other persons, the Chair is responsible for maintaining decorum, and may request such assistance as may appear necessary. Persons addressing the Board shall limit their remarks to those relevant to the pending items, and to answering questions presented by the School Board.

Those who violate rules of decorum shall be called to order by the Chair. If out-of-order remarks or other indecorous conduct persists, the Chair may order the speaker from the lectern. The order with gavel, if not heeded, will then cause authorized law enforcement officers to carry out the order.

Persons in attendance are permitted to observe proceedings. Only individuals called upon by the presiding officer shall be permitted to speak. Applause, shouting, whistling, cheering, or any other audible actions by those not called upon by the presiding officer is prohibited. Groups or individuals in the audience creating an atmosphere detrimental or disturbing to the conduct of the meeting will be asked to leave by the Chair. The Chair may call a recess when groups or individuals in the audience violate the rules of decorum, and/or threaten the safety of any Board member or other person in attendance.

Student Participation

~~Students enrolled in a public elementary or secondary school in the division are allowed to address the School Board during any public comment or citizen participation portion of a School Board meeting. Such students must follow the same sign-up procedures and rules and restrictions relating to time, place, and manner of speaking that are adopted by the School Board and applicable to all public participants.~~

~~The School Board may require a student to provide identification in the form of a current student identification card or other school document, such as a report card or a personal school email address, before allowing the student to provide oral comments, in accordance with Virginia law.~~

~~A reasonable period of time, as determined by the School Board, will be allocated at each regular meeting for community members to present matters of concern.~~

Public participation at any special called meeting of the School Board shall be determined by the School Board Chair.

Adopted: July 1, 1993

Amended: September 26, 1994; March 24, 1997; June 12, 2000, August 26, 2004;
October 22, 2009; October 23, 2014; April 23, 2015; September 8, 2016;
September 12, 2019; May 13, 2021; April 25, 2024; September 26, 2024

Equity Review: May 13, 2021

Legal Refs.: Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, §§22.1-78, 22.1-253.13:7.

Cross Ref.: BDDE, *Rules of Order*

KD, *Public Participation at School Board Meetings*

Administrative Procedures for Public Comment

Regular Meetings

Any member of the general public or group may appear in person at any regular meeting of the Board to present any Division related question, request, or item. Citizens or organizations may present matters of concern within a time limit that will depend on the number of people who wish to speak at a particular meeting. The Chair is responsible for the orderly conduct of the meeting and shall rule on such matters as the appropriateness of the subject being presented and suitability of the time for such presentation.

Special Meetings

The purpose of special meetings is to give the Board the opportunity to carry on discussions or to work through matters that take a great deal of time. Public participation at any specially called meetings of the Board shall be noticed on the meeting agenda.

Citizen Participation in Board Meetings

A. Presentations to the Board

In lieu of having a large number of individual speakers, organized groups can request up to five minutes to speak during public comment, as long as the request is received two days prior to the scheduled meeting. The Chair will then either grant the request or deny the request, and the Clerk will notify the group.

Use of the projection system for presentations to the School Board is reserved for staff scheduled agenda items only.

B. Addressing the Board

Upon recognition by the Chair, the speaker should clearly state their name, address or magisterial district and the subject of the remarks. The courtesy of the Board shall be extended to the speaker, and the speaker shall provide comments that adhere to these administrative procedures or be ruled out of order by the Chair.

C. Time Limitations

The total time for public comment shall not exceed 40 minutes, unless the School Board decides to grant more time. When there are 13 or fewer speakers, each speaker will be allotted three minutes. If there are 14 or more speakers, each speaker will be allotted two minutes.

D. For Speakers of Languages Other than English

Speakers who wish to submit a written remark may request translation support services through ESOLInterpretation@k12albemarle.org or call the International and ESOL Welcome Center at 434-296-6500

Public Comment Guidelines

The School Board invites and actively seeks the public's input in the matters relevant to School Board governance and provides for time in our business meetings to hear from our residents and community members. During public comment, we expect respectful and on-topic comments.

The School Board wishes to maintain appropriate meeting decorum so that persons in attendance have the opportunity to observe and hear the proceedings of the School Board and that attendees such as students (whether in person or via video) are not subject to inappropriate language and conduct. Disruptive behavior from speakers or from members of the public in attendance will not be tolerated. The Chair will ask anyone who willfully disrupts the meeting in a manner that prevents or interferes with the orderly conduct of such meeting to leave.

Individuals and/or organizations wishing to speak during Public Comment may sign up in advance. Signup is available online beginning at 8:30 a.m. on the Monday of the week of the School Board meeting. Online signup will be available until 2:00 p.m. on the day of the meeting. Speakers may also call the School Board Clerk's Office at 434-972-4055 to sign up for public comment until 2:00 p.m. on the day of the meeting. Members of the public who do not sign up to speak electronically or by telephone in advance of the meeting may sign up in person at the meeting with the School Board Clerk beginning at 6:00 p.m. In-person sign-up will be available until the Public Comment period of the meeting for meetings that are held in-person. The maximum number of people or groups that may speak at a meeting is 20, and the total time to be devoted to public comment per meeting will be capped at 40 minutes, unless the School Board decides to grant more time. In the event that there are more than 20 people or groups who wish to speak at a particular meeting, each speaker will be assigned a number, and numbers will be drawn to determine which people or groups will have the opportunity to speak. Those who do not have the opportunity to speak at a particular meeting may sign up to speak at a subsequent meeting and/or may submit written comments for the School Board's consideration.

Public testimony guidelines are as follows:

1. Speakers should adhere to the following protocol:
 - A. State name and address or magisterial district. Simply stating Albemarle County is not adequate.
 - B. Limit comments to those matters that are relevant to School Board governance or Division operations.
 - C. Give written statements and other supporting material to the Clerk. If unable to complete the presentation in the time allotted, a copy of supporting materials will be provided to School Board members.
2. The total time for public comment shall not exceed 40 minutes, unless the School Board decides to grant more time. When there are 13 or fewer speakers, each speaker will be allotted three minutes. If there are 14 or more speakers, each speaker will be allotted two minutes. The School Board will use a device or timer to keep track of the time for each speaker. Once a speaker's time has expired, the speaker will be so advised and must wrap up promptly.
3. In order to maintain respect for all points of view, the School Board requests no clapping, booing, or any other audible form of support or nonsupport be used. If members of the public wish to show their support for a speaker, they may stand or raise their hands.
4. The School Board does not respond to comments made during the Public Comment period. However, Board members may address comments at the end of the meeting agenda under Other Business.
5. Use of the projection system is reserved for staff scheduled agenda item presentations only.