

POLICY

2024

Community Relations

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT BOARD MEETINGS

Purpose:

The Catskill Central School District Board of Education, herein referred to as the "Board," acknowledges the significance of public input in its decision-making processes and is dedicated to promoting open discourse within the Catskill Central School District Community. While the Open Meetings Law, which went into effect in 1977, does not require public participation at meetings of public bodies, the Board of Education recognizes its responsibility to hear public comment and desires to allow public commentary at its meetings. This policy delineates the procedures governing public participation during Board meetings.

Public Participation Time Periods:

During each regular Board meeting agenda, a maximum of fifteen (15) minutes shall be designated for "Visitors' Recognition on Agenda Items." Within this period, any member of the Catskill Central School District Community, herein referred to as "Community," may address the Board directly concerning matters pertaining to items listed on the current meeting Agenda, except for restricted subjects (see Restrictions below). Each individual speaker shall be allotted a maximum of three (3) minutes.

Additionally, an additional fifteen (15) minutes shall be allocated for "Visitor Recognition on non-Agenda Items." During this period, any member of the Catskill Central School District Community may address the Board to comment on school-related matters, excluding restricted subjects (see Restrictions below). Each individual speaker shall be limited to three (3) minutes.

Registration Process:

Individuals wishing to address the Board during the designated public participation periods must register their names, addresses, and the topics they intend to address with the Clerk of the Board prior to the commencement of the meeting.

Eligibility for Speakers:

Participation in the public comment sessions is restricted to members of the "Catskill Central School District Community." This category includes individuals residing within the district's boundaries, employees of the Catskill Central School District, and members of the local business community.

Conduct and Restrictions:

All speakers are required to conduct themselves in a respectful and civil manner. The use of obscene language, making libelous statements, issuing threats of violence, or promoting racial, religious, or other forms of prejudice shall not be tolerated.

The following subjects are deemed unacceptable during all "Visitor Recognition" periods:

- Comments related to individual employment matters. Such comments should be directed through appropriate channels within the district's human resources or personnel department or via union representation.

POLICY

2024

Community Relations

- Comments regarding ongoing or upcoming collective bargaining negotiations are not permissible during public comment periods and should be addressed through union leadership or official negotiation processes.
- Remarks concerning individual students, teachers, parents, or student discipline cases should not be addressed during public comment periods and should be referred to the appropriate school administrators for resolution.
- Comments or statements that endorse discrimination, harassment, or harm based on factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or other protected characteristics are prohibited during public comment periods to maintain an inclusive and respectful environment.

Questions and Responses:

Speakers may direct their remarks to the Chairperson and may pose questions or provide comments to Board members or other district officials only with the approval of the Chairperson. Board members and the Superintendent shall have the privilege of posing questions to any person addressing the Board.

Matters Not on the Agenda:

Queries and comments from the public pertaining to matters absent from the agenda shall be acknowledged and referred to the Superintendent for suitable action. Individuals desiring to have matters included on the agenda should adhere to the provisions of Policy 2342, Agenda Preparation and Dissemination.

Chairperson's Authority:

The Chairperson shall bear responsibility for maintaining the orderly conduct of the meeting and shall adjudicate matters such as the allocation of time for public discussion and the suitability of the subject being presented. The Chairperson possesses the prerogative to terminate any presentation violating this policy. The Board, as a collective entity, shall possess ultimate authority in determining the appropriateness of all such rulings.

Handling Large Numbers of Visitors:

Should a substantial number of visitors seek to address the Board concerning a single topic, the Chairperson, following consultation with Board members, shall ascertain the appropriateness of requesting visitors to designate representative speakers, convening a special public meeting, or providing an alternative platform for discussion.

Policy Review:

This policy shall be subject to periodic examination by the Catskill Central School District Board of Education to ensure its continued efficacy and alignment with the district's objectives and pertinent laws and regulations.

Adoption date: July 2003

Revised/Adopted: 5/21/08

Revised /Adopted: 2/08/12

Revised/First Reading: 01/10/24

Second Reading and Adoption: 02/7/24

POLICY

2024

Community Relations