

# THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA

SECTION: COMMUNITY

TITLE: Public Participation in Commission Meetings

ADOPTED: October 5, 2011

REVISED: May 18, 2017

## 903 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN COMMISSION MEETINGS

### **Purpose**

The School Reform Commission recognizes the value to school governance of public comment on educational issues and the importance of involving members of the public in SRC meetings. The SRC also recognizes its responsibility for proper governance of the district and the need to conduct its business in an orderly and efficient manner.[1]

### **Authority**

The SRC shall adopt policy to govern public participation in SRC meetings necessary to conduct its meeting and to maintain order.[1][2][3]

In order to permit fair and orderly expression of public comment, the SRC shall provide an opportunity at each open meeting of the SRC for residents and taxpayers to comment on matters of concern, official action or deliberation before the SRC prior to official action by the SRC.[4]

If the SRC determines there is not sufficient time at a meeting for public comments, the comment period may be deferred to the next regular meeting or to a special meeting occurring before the next regular meeting.[4]

### **Delegation of Responsibility**

The presiding officer at each public SRC meeting shall follow SRC policy for the conduct of public meetings. Where his/her ruling is disputed, it may be overruled by a majority of those SRC members present and voting.[1][3]

### **Guidelines**

Whenever issues identified by the participant are subject to remediation under policies and procedures of the SRC, they shall be dealt with in accordance with those policies and procedures and the organizational structure of the district.

The SRC requires that public participants be:

1. Residents or taxpayers of this district.
2. Anyone representing a group in the community or school district.
3. Any representative of a firm eligible to bid on materials or services solicited by the SRC.
4. Any district employee.
5. Any district student.
6. Anyone having registered a legitimate interest in a contemplated action of the SRC.

The meeting agenda and all pertinent documents shall be available to the press and public at the meetings.

#### Public Comment

The public may submit comments to the SRC in writing and deliver them to the SRC office located at 440 North Broad Street, Suite 101, Philadelphia, PA 19130.

The public may submit spoken comments to the SRC by registering to address the SRC at a regularly scheduled or special meeting. The procedures for addressing the SRC are as follows:

1. Individuals must register with the District's Office of Parent, Community and Family Engagement by calling 215-400-4180 no later than 4:30 p.m. on the business day immediately preceding the meeting at which they wish to address the SRC.
2. Individuals must register in their own name and cannot register on behalf of someone else.
3. Individuals representing an organization must identify that organization at the time they register.
4. Individuals must be recognized by the presiding officer and must preface their comments by an announcement of their name, group affiliation if applicable, and the subject on which they intend to address the SRC.
5. Individuals must bring seven (7) written copies of their comments with them to the meeting.
6. Individuals may speak for no more than three (3) minutes.
7. No more than four (4) individuals on the same side of an issue will be permitted to speak, though an unlimited number of individuals may leave written comments for the SRC to review.

8. No participant may register to speak more than once during a meeting.
9. Individuals will be ruled out of order if they attempt to comment or complain about the conduct or performance of a particular district employee and will be directed to address their comments to the appropriate district administrator in accordance with SRC policy.[5]
10. Individuals will be ruled out of order if they attempt to make any remarks of a personal nature regarding any other individual, whether or not that person is present.
11. Individuals will be ruled out of order and asked to leave the meeting if they use any vulgar or profane language.

The presiding officer may:

1. Interrupt or terminate a participant's statement when the statement is too lengthy, personally directed, abusive, obscene, or irrelevant.
2. Request any individual to leave the meeting when that person does not observe reasonable decorum.
3. Request the assistance of law enforcement officers to remove a disorderly person when his/her conduct interferes with the orderly progress of the meeting.
4. Call a recess or adjourn to another time when the lack of public decorum interferes with the orderly conduct of the meeting.
5. Suspend or alter any of the procedures related to addressing the SRC.[6][7]

### Audience Protocols

In order to promote transparency and understanding of how the SRC governs the district, and to educate the public regarding district business, the SRC encourages members of the public to attend public meetings of the SRC.

To ensure that all individuals attending public meetings of the SRC have the opportunity to observe the meeting and hear those individuals who have registered to address the SRC, all members of the public attending all meetings shall be expected to:

1. Turn off or silence all cell phones, pagers, and other electronic devices.
2. Limit the displaying of signs, posters, or placards inside the room where the meeting is being held to appropriate locations.
3. Know that it is unlawful to disrupt public meetings and that individuals who do so may be prosecuted.[8]

4. Understand that the presiding officer may instruct that an individual be removed if s/he determines that they are disrupting the meeting.

Electronic recording devices and cameras, in addition to those used as official recording devices, shall be permitted at public meetings under guidelines established by the SRC.

**Legal References:**

1. Pol. 006 - Meetings
2. 65 Pa. C.S.A. 710
3. Pol. 903 - Public Participation in Commission Meetings
4. 65 Pa. C.S.A. 710.1
5. Pol. 906 - Public Complaints
6. 24 P.S. 407
7. Philadelphia Home Rule Charter - 12-209
8. 18 Pa. C.S.A. 5508

**Related Information:**

65 Pa. C.S.A. 701 et seq