

## **Policy Title: Public Participation in Board Meetings**

**Policy Code: 903**

**Effective Date: [Insert Date]**

### **I. Purpose**

The Big Spring School District recognizes the importance of public input in the decision-making process and is committed to fostering an environment of transparency and collaboration. This policy outlines the guidelines and procedures for public participation in board meetings.

### **II. Authority**

The Board adopts this policy to govern public participation in Board meetings necessary to conduct its meeting and to maintain order. In order to permit fair and orderly expression of public comment, the Board shall provide an opportunity at each open meeting of the Board for residents and taxpayers to comment on matters of concern, official action, or deliberation which are or may be before the Board prior to official action by the Board. If the Board 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. The total time allotted for public comment will be limited to sixty (60) minutes. The Board reserves the right to extend the total time allotment past the sixty (60) minutes by majority vote.

### **Delegation of Responsibility**

The presiding officer at each open Board meeting shall follow Board policy for the conduct of open meetings. Where the presiding officer's ruling is disputed, it may be overruled by a majority of those Board members present and voting.

### **III. Public Comment Period**

1. **Regular Meetings:** Two designated times during regular board meetings shall be allocated for public comment. The first period will be scheduled early in the meeting agenda, and the second period will be just before the Board Reports at the end of the meeting.
  - **New Agenda Items:** Any new item added to the agenda during the meeting will immediately open a new public comment period specific to that item. This shall still fall within the 60-minute total allotted time for the meeting.
2. **Time Limit:** Each participant is kindly advised to restrict their public comments to a total duration of five (5) minutes. This time limitation has been established to facilitate a fair and equitable distribution of speaking time among all participants and to ensure the efficient progression of the public comment session.
3. **Group Time:** In the event that multiple individuals wish to speak on the same topic, they may choose to pool their time with a limit of ten (10) minutes. Groups may have one speaker or may divide the time between speakers. Groups may have a guest speaker but the group would then be limited to addressing just agenda items as with any other guest or expert speaker.

### **IV. Submission of Requests**

1. **In-Person Participation:** Individuals wishing to address the board are encouraged to sign up prior to the meeting, indicating their intent to speak during the public comment period.

- **Eligibility for Public Comment:**

Only the following individuals or groups are eligible to participate in public comment:

- District Members (including residents, those employed within the District, vendors working with the District)
- Invited guest or expert speakers; must be accompanied by a District member, is limited to only items on the current agenda. Request to speak on topics outside of the agenda will need to be done at the meeting of the whole
- Students
- Teachers and Staff
- Administration
- Contractors currently engaged in business with the district
- Big Spring Community Groups
- **Name Requirement:** The name of the participant is required for accurate record-keeping. This ensures proper spelling in the minutes.
- **Optional Contact Information:** Participants may optionally provide contact information for follow-up purposes.

## V. Guidelines for Public Comment

1. **Civility:** Speakers are encouraged to address the board with respect and courtesy. While civility is recommended, it is acknowledged that diverse opinions may be expressed passionately. Threats of physical harm or actual physical harm, as well as illegal actions, taken against the public, district members, staff, administration, teachers, or the board will be taken seriously, and individuals responsible shall be referred to law enforcement.
2. **Topics of Discussion:** Public comments should pertain to items on the meeting agenda or issues relevant to the school district. The board may not respond to public comments during the meeting but may address them at a later date or designate the Superintendent to follow up if necessary. The presiding officer may interrupt or terminate a participant's statement when the statement reveals confidential information about a minor child.
3. **Objections:** Members of the District may make objections at any time during the meeting. All objections must be recorded in the minutes of the meeting. Objections must pertain to a rule or law not being followed. Objections may follow simply, state that you Object, state the law or rule you believe to be not followed, state your name for record. The Board is not required to pause the meeting and rule on the objection as it may require further study or legal review. The Board president, administration or solicitor may address the objection at a later date.

## VI. Board Response

1. The board may respond to public comments during the meeting or may direct the superintendent to investigate and report back to the board at a subsequent meeting. Additionally, a fact-finding committee can be established by motion of a board member to further investigate and gather information on specific matters raised during public comments.
2. Board members are encouraged to interact with the public.

## VII. Extended Public Comment Period

If public comments are expected to exceed 60 minutes in total, the board may, by a majority vote, schedule a special meeting dedicated solely to hearing public comments in full or extend the time limit for the current comment period.

## VIII. Disruption

In accordance with legal constraints, individuals cannot be removed from the meeting unless they are engaging in acts of violence or threatening acts of violence, obstructing the meeting, or other unlawful actions. For all other disturbances, the board may choose to recess or reschedule or adjourn. The decision to recess or reschedule will be made by the board president or by majority vote. The board, by a majority vote, reserves the right to override the decision to recess or reschedule.

- **Obstructing**
  - **Verbal Disruption:** Interrupting speakers, shouting, or engaging in arguments that disrupt the flow of the meeting
  - **Refusal to Follow Rules:** Ignoring or refusing to comply with the meeting's rules of order or parliamentary procedures
  - **Tampering with Equipment:** Sabotaging or tampering with equipment used for the meeting, such as microphones, projectors, or recording devices
  - **Physical Obstruction:** Physically blocking entry or exit points, preventing members from entering or leaving the meeting venue

## IX. Disruption by Signs, Video Recordings, and Electronic Devices

1. **Signs:** Signs brought into the meeting space will be considered disruptive if they block the view of the board, participants, or official video recordings of the meeting. Attendees are asked to ensure that any signs they bring do not obstruct the visual access of others or impede the official recording of the proceedings. Signs must remain stationary during the meeting. Signs may not include content which is lewd, vulgar, obscene or which encourages illegal activity.
2. **Video Recordings:** Video recording devices will be considered disruptive if they block the view of the board, participants, or official video recording. Attendees using video recording devices are requested to position them in a manner that does not obstruct the view of others or interfere with the official recording.
3. **Electronic Devices:** Electronic devices, including but not limited to phones and tablets, will be considered disruptive if they block the view of the board, participants, or official video recording devices. These devices will also be deemed disruptive if they emit sounds that interfere with the

board and participants' ability to hear the meeting. Attendees are requested to keep their phones/pagers on silent or vibrate mode.

**X. Documents**

The meeting agenda and all pertinent documents shall be available on the Districts website at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting.

**XI. Changes to Policy**

The board reserves the right to amend this policy as necessary. Any proposed changes to the policy will be discussed at a public meeting before adoption.

**XII. Severability Clause**

If any provision of this policy is held by a court of competent jurisdiction to be invalid or unenforceable, the remaining provisions of this policy will continue in full force and effect. The invalid or unenforceable provision shall be replaced by a valid and enforceable provision that most closely matches the intent of the original provision.