



Procedures and Guidelines for Public Participation in Remote Board Meetings

On March 14, 2020, Governor Lamont signed Executive Order 7B which suspends the in-person open meeting requirements of the Freedom of Information Act (provided certain conditions are met) in an effort to mitigate the risk of transmitting COVID-19 through in-person public meetings and proceedings. The administration has taken steps necessary to ensure that the Board of Education will satisfy the conditions set forth in [Executive Order 7B](#) for holding Board meetings and proceedings remotely by videoconference until such time that in-person public meetings are safe to resume.

The public can view remote Board meetings and proceedings in real time on the [district's website](#) and on Cable Channel 78. In addition, remote Board meetings and proceedings will be recorded, and [such recordings](#) will be posted on the district's website within seven days of the meeting or proceeding and made available within a reasonable time in the district's offices at Westport Town Hall.

Consistent with Board Policy 1120, the Board of Education welcomes public participation in its meetings, including meetings held remotely pursuant to Executive Order 7B. The procedure for public comment during such remote meetings is as follows:

- At certain time(s) during the meeting, the Board Chair will invite the public to submit written comments using a [Google form](#) during a certain designated period (a "Submission Period"). Each Submission Period will be 5 minutes long, unless otherwise indicated by the Board Chair at the beginning of the Submission Period.
- The public may submit written comments during a Submission Period until the Board Chair indicates that the Submission Period has ended. During each Submission Period, the Board Chair will issue a "last call" for public comments shortly before the Submission Period ends.
- In order to provide more equitable access for all members of the public who wish comment during a remote meeting, the Board of Education has set a limit of 800 characters (approximately 150 words) for each comment submission. To that end,

it is important that each comment submitted is solely tied to the agenda item being discussed. The Board of Education is also setting a limit of one comment submission per person per agenda item.

- The Board Chair, or designee, will read aloud the comments received during a Submission Period in the order in which such comments were received (a “Reading Period”). Each Reading Period will be 15 minutes long, unless otherwise indicated by the Board Chair at the beginning of the Reading Period.
- Any comments submitted during a Submission Period for which there was no time during a Reading Period to read aloud, along with all comments submitted during any Submission Period, will be posted no later than the end of the following business day in the [View Live and Archived Meetings](#) section on the district’s website.

The guidelines for public participation in Board meetings held remotely pursuant to Executive Order 7B will be consistent with the guidelines set forth in Regulation 1120, except as outlined above and to the extent necessary to accommodate a remote format. Regulation 1120 provides that public participation in Board meetings is welcome using the following guidelines:

- Comment on non-agenda topics on educational matters will occur during the first 15 minutes except when the staff or guest presentations are scheduled.
- Public may speak as agenda topics come up for discussion or information.
- Speakers on non-agenda items limited to 2 minutes each, except by prior arrangement with Chair.
- Speakers must give name and use microphone.
- Responses to questions may be deferred if answers are not immediately available.
- Board will not engage in discussion or in dialogue with the public on non-agenda items unless the item is added to the agenda (regular meeting only) by a 2/3 vote of the Board.
- Public comment is normally not invited for topics listed for action after having been publicly discussed at one or more meetings.
- Public comment is generally not invited at meetings which are designated as work sessions.

Please note that the Board has suspended for the duration of the period in which the Board continues to meet remotely as permitted by Executive Order 7B, to enable implementation of appropriate procedures for welcoming public comment during regular Board meetings that are held remotely, Part 3, “Public Address,” of Board Bylaw 9324. The Board has authorized the Superintendent of Schools to adopt the procedures above for welcoming public comment during

regular remote Board meetings. The procedures above therefore apply to all Board meetings, both regular and special, that are held remotely.