

FAQ'S

HOW DOES THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE AND THAT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT DIFFER?

THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE CONSISTS OF PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN AND ARE ELECTED THE COMMUNITY. WE ARE YOUR NEIGHBORS: PARENTS, GRANDPARENTS, LOCAL BUSINESS OWNERS, RETIREES – ORDINARY CITIZENS. WE ARE NON-PARTISAN AND WE RECEIVE NO PAY OR BENEFITS FOR THIS PUBLIC SERVICE.

THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE HAS A DUAL ROLE: TO REPRESENT THE CONCERNS OF THE CITIZENS, TAXPAYERS AND PARENTS TO THE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS, AND TO REPRESENT THE NEEDS OF THE STUDENTS AND SCHOOL DISTRICT TO THE CITIZENS, TAXPAYERS AND PARENTS OF THE COMMUNITY.

THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE DOES NOT OPERATE THE DISTRICT ON A DAY-TO-DAY BASIS; THAT IS THE JOB OF THE SUPERINTENDENT, WHO IS THE DISTRICT'S CHIEF EXECUTIVE.

RATHER, THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE SETS THE POLICIES, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR THE DISTRICT – AND IT HOLDS THE SUPERINTENDENT RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTING THE POLICIES AND ACHIEVING THE GOALS.

I HAVE A PROBLEM WITH MY SCHOOL. IS THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE THE APPROPRIATE BODY TO ADDRESS IT?

MAYBE. WE RECOMMEND WORKING UP THE CHAIN OF COMMAND.

FOR INSTANCE, IF A PARENT OR GUARDIAN HAS A PROBLEM WITH SOMETHING HAPPENING WITHIN A CLASSROOM, (S)HE SHOULD FIRST ADDRESS IT WITH THE TEACHER AND, IF THE ISSUE IS NOT RESOLVED, THE PARENT/GUARDIAN SHOULD TURN TO THE PRINCIPAL OR SUPERVISOR, AND THEN THE SUPERINTENDENT. THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE SHOULD BE THE "COURT OF LAST RESORT".

DO I HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK AT THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETINGS?

STATE LAW REQUIRES A [PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD](#) AT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETINGS. COMMITTEES ARE ALLOWED TO ESTABLISH REASONABLE RESTRICTIONS ON THE TIME, PLACE AND MANNER OF PUBLIC COMMENT.

FOR INSTANCE, SCHOOL COMMITTEES TYPICALLY SET GUIDELINES ON THE LENGTH OF AN INDIVIDUAL'S COMMENT (E.G., A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF TIME PER PERSON), SO NO ONE PERSON DOMINATES THE MEETING.

THE MARBLEHEAD SCHOOL COMMITTEE TYPICALLY OFFERS PUBLIC COMMENT AT THE BEGINNING OF EACH MEETING, PRIOR TO COMMITTEE DELIBERATION.

WHAT IS PROPER PROTOCOL FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION?

COMMENTS FROM CITIZENS GENERALLY GO THROUGH THE CHAIR AT THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING, SCHOOL COMMITTEES USE THE PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO LISTEN TO CITIZEN CONCERNS, BUT NOT TO DEBATE ISSUES OR ENTER INTO A QUESTION-AND-ANSWER SESSION OR A "CROSS EXAMINATION" BETWEEN THE PUBLIC AND INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS.

BE AWARE THAT NOT ALL ISSUES BROUGHT BEFORE A SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING WILL BE RESOLVED THAT EVENING. THE COMMITTEE MAY RESPOND TO PUBLIC COMMENT BY SEEKING ADDITIONAL INFORMATION OR BY DELEGATING THE AUTHORITY TO INVESTIGATE THE ISSUE TO THE SUPERINTENDENT OR HIS/HER DESIGNEE.

WHILE PUBLIC EDUCATION CAN BE AN EMOTIONAL ISSUE, AND UNDERSTANDABLY SO, THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE WILL STRIVE TO MAINTAIN A CERTAIN LEVEL OF DECORUM AT MEETINGS. MANY MEETINGS ARE RECORDED OR TELEVISED, AND STUDENTS OFTEN ATTEND OR PARTICIPATE IN THE MEETINGS. AS SUCH, CITIZENS ARE EXPECTED TO MAINTAIN A TONE OF COURTESY AND CIVILITY.

HOW DOES THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE SET ITS MEETING RULES?

THE MARBLEHEAD SCHOOL COMMITTEE FOLLOWS THE MASSACHUSETTS [OPEN MEETING LAW](#) AND OUR MEETINGS ARE GUIDED BY ROBERTS RULES OF ORDER, WHICH DESCRIBES HOW MEETINGS ARE RUN, HOW MOTIONS AND VOTES ARE TAKEN AND OTHER PROCEDURES.

THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE SOMETIMES GOES INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION. WHY CAN'T THE PUBLIC WITNESS WHAT OCCURS THERE?

BY STATE LAW, SOME TOPICS ARE DISCUSSED IN "EXECUTIVE SESSION" (OR CLOSED-DOOR MEETING) SESSION. AMONG THE MOST COMMON ARE:

- PRIVACY ISSUES (INCLUDING EMPLOYEE PRIVACY AS WELL AS MATTERS DEALING WITH INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS AND STUDENT DISCIPLINE);
- ANTICIPATED LITIGATION AND ISSUES INVOLVING ATTORNEY-CLIENT PRIVILEGE;
- NEGOTIATIONS WITH LABOR UNIONS AND NEGOTIATING STRATEGY;
- MATTERS INVOLVING THE PURCHASE OF PROPERTY;
- ANY ISSUES DEALING WITH SECURITY THAT COULD UNDERMINE SAFETY IF MADE PUBLIC.