

SAN CARLOS SCHOOLS DISTRICT

GUIDE TO SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS

By law, meetings of a majority of Board members are to be held in public, with an agenda published in advance. The School Board meeting calendar is posted on the District web site at <http://www.scsdk8.org> as well as on our web-based “Agenda Online” system, which can be accessed at <http://sancarlos.csbaagendaonline.net> (for meetings before May 1, 2015) or <https://sancarlos.agendaonline.net/public/> (for meetings after May 1, 2015). Through Agenda Online, the public has access to the Board meeting presentations and materials.

The public is invited and encouraged to attend, as well as speak at, any public School Board meeting. See the other side of this sheet for details on public participation.

Under certain circumstances, the Board may have a “closed” meeting, which could include topics such as personnel, labor negotiations, or legal matters. Closed sessions are not open to the public.

The Types of Board Meetings

There are generally three major formats for Board Meetings:

- Standard Board Meetings
- Board Workshops
- “Town Hall” type meetings

Most meetings will follow the format of the standard board meeting, which has the strictest format (see below). Board Workshops are generally focused on a single topic and will follow a more informal discussion style among the Board members, administrative staff, and guest experts. “Town Hall” type meetings are designed to get more detailed public input and/or have a discussion more directly with the members of the public and may follow a number of different formats depending on the topic.

The Format and Flow

Standard Board Meetings will generally have the following format:

- **Call to Order** – by the Board President
- **Report from closed session (if applicable)** – by the Board President
- **Communications from the Public, Employee Groups, Staff, and Board Members** (see the following page on public participation at Board meetings)
- **Presentations / Acknowledgements** - Scheduled presentations from staff or invited guests
- **Consent Agenda** – a series of actions that they Board may approve “in bulk” – these tend to be items more administrative in nature. Board members may “pull” an item from the Consent Agenda to discuss and vote on separately
- **Discussion Items** – items for Board discussion for which there will be no specific Board vote, however a consensus of the Board may direct District Staff to do additional work or to bring a follow-up action item to the Board
- **Action Items** – items up for a vote by the Board – most items require a simple majority of Board members to pass
- **Agenda Setting** – discussion of future agenda items and the meeting calendar
- **Board Reflections** – Board members may give comments on their view of the process and/or accomplishments of this meeting
- **Adjournment** – by the Board President
- **Closed Session (if applicable – may also happen before public session)**

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT BOARD MEETINGS

School Board meetings are meetings of the Governing Board IN public, but are not meetings WITH the public. The District and Board seek to ensure that the public may exercise its right to be heard, surface issues, and follow resolution of such issues. The following explanation is meant to resolve some confusion about the participation of the public in Board Meetings.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ARE ASKED TO SPEAK ONLY WHEN RECOGNIZED BY THE BOARD PRESIDENT. Also, please keep in mind that all discussions should be civil and respectful. The Board President has the right to determine the appropriateness of any topic and the Board President shall not permit any disturbance or willful interruption of Board meetings.

Public Comments for Items not on the Agenda

Any member of the public has the right to address the Board on any issue, even if that topic is not on the current agenda. However, if a public comment is about a matter not on the agenda, the Board is limited in its ability to respond to the speaker, as it is illegal for the Board to have a discussion around such topics. This would be a “back door” way of introducing agenda items without giving adequate notice to the public and would be a violation of the Brown Act, California’s open meeting law for public bodies.

Members of the public are encouraged to fill out a blue “speaking card” and give it to the Secretary of the meeting prior to the meeting start. The Board President will first invite members of the public who have filled out a speaking card to address the Board, and then ask if there are any additional attendees who wish to speak.

Each public speaker shall limit his/her comments to three minutes, but is welcome to distribute any materials to staff and/or the Board. The Board President will limit the total cumulative time of speakers on the same topic to 20 minutes. Due to the restrictions on discussing non-agendized topics, Board members’ responses are restricted under SCSD Board policy to the following:

- Asking clarifying questions of fact
- Correcting any misstatements of fact
- Upon a consensus of the majority of Board members, directing the Superintendent to gather more information related to the topic
- Requesting the Superintendent/Board President place a topic on the agenda of a future meeting

PLEASE NOTE THAT IF A BOARD MEMBER RESPONDS TO A MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC, THE PUBLIC SPEAKER IS NOT PERMITTED TO RESPOND IN TURN TO THAT BOARD MEMBER (UNLESS OF COURSE IT IS AN ANSWER TO A DIRECT QUESTION FOR CLARIFICATION). The Board President is responsible for ensuring that a “discussion” of such topics does not take place.

Also, note that certain topics – including matters regarding personnel or potential legal matters – will likely not elicit any response from Board members or staff. In any case, the public should appreciate that their comments are valued and heard, even if no response is given at the meeting.

Public Comments for Items on the Agenda

During selected discussion items and action items on the agenda, the public has a right to make a comment about such specific item. During such discussions, the Board President will ask if there are any comments from the public. Under Town Hall meeting formats or with agenda items of high public interest, Board members may – with permission of the Board President – interact with members of the public.