

## **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETINGS**

Meetings of the Board of Education of the Sharon Springs Central School District are held in order to conduct the business of the School District. Board meetings are held in public so that residents and other concerned individuals may observe the Board in action. The attendance of these persons at Board meetings indicates their interest and concern for the education of the students of the School District. The Board believes it may best represent its constituents when residents take time to attend Board meetings, to express their opinions and to raise questions.

Though it is not required by Open Meeting Law, time shall be set aside during each business meeting of the Board for members of the community or other interested parties to express their questions, concerns, and ideas about the School District to the Board. During this time, residents, representatives of School District employee unions, interested members of the educational community and others may comment on any aspect of school district operations.

Subjects which are confidential and appropriate for Executive Session may not be discussed during public sessions or by a speaker during the public comment portion of the Board meeting under any circumstances. These subjects include but are not limited to:

1. Personnel matters regarding specific employees.
2. Matters about specific students.
3. Contractual negotiations.
4. Proposed, pending, or current litigation.
5. Confidential matters regarding children with disabilities.

The Board shall take immediate steps to stop comments on the above items. Failure to do so could lead to litigation against the District based on claims of slander, libel, defamation, stigma, or damage to reputation. The Board will also not permit interruptions, slanderous remarks, or use of specific names by speakers or the audience. The Board will not answer questions during public comment, but will refer speakers to the appropriate administrator.

As there is no legal requirement to hold a public comment opportunity during a Board meeting, the Board can legally decide to discontinue public comment or limit public comments to these topics covered by that meeting's Agenda. However, in the interest of openness and community participation, a public comment period shall be provided at each business meeting, designated as "Privilege of the Floor."

When members of the public speak to the Board, they will state their name and address, the name of the organization (if any) which they represent, and the subject they wish to comment on. In order to conduct the Board's business in an orderly and efficient manner, public participation will be limited to a reasonable, brief period of time. If a matter being discussed by a speaker is especially complex or lengthy, the Board may request that the matter be put in writing or may schedule a public hearing or special meeting on the issue. When circumstances warrant, the Board President may extend the speakers' time to present their concerns.

The President of the Board is responsible for the orderly conduct of the meeting and shall rule on such matters as the time to be allowed for public discussion, the appropriate behavior of the speaker and the appropriateness to the forum of the subject being discussed. The Board as a whole shall have the final decision in determining the appropriateness of all such rulings.