

Standard Guidelines for Open Meetings of District Advisory Bodies

According to Policy BDF(Local), adopted by the Board of Trustees on June 27, 2011, the Coordinator of District Advisory Bodies, who is designated by the Superintendent, shall provide standard guidelines for open meetings that include, but are not limited to, notification, citizens communications, and visitor protocols.

These guidelines do not invoke the Texas Open Meetings Act per sé, but are based on certain basic provisions of that law to effectuate the foundation of Policy BDF(Local) – namely, to ensure openness and transparency among all district advisory bodies. To that end, the following guidelines for open meetings shall be included or referenced in the bylaws or charters of all district advisory bodies:

All regular and other plenary meetings of district advisory bodies must be open to the public.

At the discretion of a district advisory body, subcommittee or workgroup meetings (that do not contain a quorum of the advisory body) may not be open to the public.

Agendas shall be prepared for all regular and other plenary meetings and posted on the advisory body website, and at a location accessible to the public (such as a designated kiosk or bulletin board), at least 72 hours in advance of meetings.

During a posted meeting, deliberation shall not take place on any item not included on the posted agenda.

All district advisory bodies shall apply the attached Citizens Communications and Visitor Guidelines. These guidelines are consistent with those of most governmental entities that follow open meetings requirements. As citizens communications may involve comments on any number of issues which are not known in advance, dialogue is not allowed during citizens communications to ensure that no deliberation occurs on matters not posted on the agenda. However, a speaker may be asked to provide a brief clarification. An advisory body may always ask a speaker to come back to a future meeting and put that person on the agenda specifically for dialogue. In addition, to allow for broader opportunities for public input, advisory bodies may hold special meetings (often called forums or conversations) for dialogue on specific topics.

All district advisory bodies shall utilize the attached standard Speaker and Comment Card.



**Austin Independent School District
District Advisory Bodies
Citizens Communications and Visitor Guidelines**

Citizens Communications

At the beginning of each regular or other plenary meeting of a district advisory body, or any special called meeting in which a consent decision or voting of the advisory body may occur, time will be provided for citizens communications. In order to ensure sufficient time for the advisory body to complete its business, the total time provided for citizens communications may be limited, and the time provided to individual speakers may also be limited. (Although this may vary from group to group, the total time is usually 10-15 minutes, and speakers are usually allowed 2-3 minutes each.) Speakers may be asked to sit in a designated area until called upon by the presiding officer to speak.

Persons wishing to provide citizens communications will be asked to fill out a speaker card. Persons wishing to speak must acknowledge on the speaker card that they have read these guidelines. Persons will be called upon to speak in the order speaker cards were received.

If persons who have signed up to speak do not have an opportunity to do so because time runs out, they may provide written comments on the card provided.

The presiding officer will announce, *“This is the time the [name of advisory body] has dedicated to receive citizens communications. Do we have anyone who has signed up to speak?”*

If not, the presiding officer will proceed to the next item on the agenda. If someone has signed up to speak, the presiding officer will make the following statements:

1. *“Speakers will be provided [number, normally two to three] minutes to address the [name of advisory body] on any issue directly related to its work.”*
2. *“There will be no dialogue between speakers and the members, however, we will be listening carefully. In some cases, a speaker may be asked for clarification.”*
3. *“After citizens communications have concluded, speakers are welcome to remain, but no further opportunities to address the advisory body will be provided during the meeting.”*

Visitors

All regular meetings and any other plenary meetings of district advisory bodies are open to the public, and visitors are welcome. Visitors are considered anyone present who are not members or ex officer members of the advisory body. This includes persons who may be attending on behalf of a member. Visitors will be asked to sign the attendance sheet, and asked to read these guidelines.

Visitors may be asked to sit in a designated area. Visitors who do not wish to sign up to speak under citizens communications are also welcome to provide written comments on the card provided. If officially part of an agenda item, visitors may be asked to present information and participate in discussion related specifically to that agenda item. Otherwise, visitors are observers and may not actively participate in the meeting.

The staff coordinators of the advisory body will ensure that a reasonable number of additional handouts are available for visitors.



Austin Independent School District
[Name of Advisory Body]

SPEAKER AND COMMENT CARD

Date: _____ Name: _____

Telephone: _____ Email Address: _____

Please Check One or Both of the Following:

I would like to speak

I am providing written comments

