

## School board public forum changes posted

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### Content

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The Lancaster County School District may be changing the order of events at future school board meetings, specifically moving public forum to the end of the meeting instead of the beginning.

Bryan Vaughn, director of safety, transportation and communications, posted an outline of the changes on the Lancaster County School District Safety and Transportation Facebook page Tuesday, May 9.

The post said meetings will now have a clear bag policy, attendees will be checked through security, speakers must sign up before 7 p.m., public forum rules will be handed out to speakers and no one will be allowed to approach the board to distribute materials.

“Public comments have been moved on the agenda and will fall under letter L,” Vaughn wrote. “Public comments will now be at the end of the board meeting. No one will be allowed to sign up for someone else. There will be no walk-ups or last-minute additions.”

While the post was titled “at the direction of the school board,” it is not necessarily a new school board policy. Amending the public forum policy is permitted without a public board vote, and outside of the board meeting setting, according to Vaughn.

However, the agenda items and order are voted on at the start of each board meeting, and the floor will be open for discussion. Board member Melvin Stroble said that every agenda is a proposed agenda, until voted on and approved in a school board meeting.

“We are required by statute to make the public aware of the topics that will be discussed by the board; that’s why we print the agenda,” Stroble said. “But a board member can modify or even add to it.”

Board member Eddie Boykin is in favor of the proposed change.

“I think it’s a good idea,” Boykin said. “We have been getting very distracted from the business of doing what we need to do to take care of our students. I think this is a great way to focus on taking care of the students first.”

Boykin also said that by requiring speakers to listen to the entire meeting before having the chance to speak, some of their questions might be answered for them.

“This will give us an opportunity to focus on the business of education, which is one of the things I ran to do, I joined the board to do,” he said. “I like the idea.”

Board meetings are held at 7 p.m. once a month, and have sometimes gone five or more hours. The last two board meetings ended by 10 p.m., including a break for executive session, but in the past, some have gone later into the night.

“The agendas are set up a week prior (to the meeting) or a few days prior and they go over the leadership of the specific board,” Vaughn said.

The vote to approve this change in the agenda order will take place at the beginning of the May 16 school board meeting at the district office, 300 S. Catawba St., Lancaster.

“We should not seek to make changes that would reduce or minimize community input because we feel uncomfortable or we are not receiving accolades,” Stroble said.