

# Public Comments for the School Committee Meeting on March 13, 2025

Nathan Chung, Northampton (MA) resident

Dear Chair of the Northampton School Committee,

This is Nathan Chung who submitted an 11-page public comment document mostly focusing on the conduct of the Ward 4 School Committee member to the City Council during its regular meeting on February 20, 2025. I submitted the same document to the School Committee, SC for short from now, via the members-at-large the next morning on February 21. I understand Policy BEDH on public comment allows for written comments to be presented and addressed to the Chair of the School Committee. I likely will not be able to attend the March 13th meeting due to a conflict, so I am sending you a relatively brief written comment. This document is for all the SC members, so please share it freely. Also, at your discretion, please read this comment during the public comment section if appropriate. To save time, reading the numbered list would work better.

SC members are welcome to contact me using their public email accounts. I want to remind all members that emails used for public business using personal email accounts still become public records. Additionally, non-public emails using personal email accounts become the property of the recipients, so recipients have the freedom to keep and share them. Using personal email accounts is not a tool to avoid accountability as public officials.

For brevity, I will be discussing some suggestions as a numbered list. Please note that I have strong opinions, and these suggestions might not be practical. To note, the City Charter and the School Committee Policies are all publicly available at <https://ecode360.com/13265232> and [https://northamptonschools.org/140428\\_2](https://northamptonschools.org/140428_2), respectively. I will be referring to them by their reference numbers and letters.

1. Per Policy BEDH Item 2, a public comment speaker who needs an interpreter or has a communication disability are allowed 6 minutes rather than the normal 3. Even if somebody has a disability, if it is not a communication disability, it would be inappropriate for them to cite this policy to get 6 minutes.
2. From my experience serving on a board at another municipality for about 22 months, I saw that much of the work gets done between the meetings. Between the meetings is an opportunity for the SC to work with the experts at the administration to come up with specific solutions, budgets, and ideas. If a committee has too many subcommittees and meetings, it can take away from this opportunity. Also, it can prevent a small number of members below quorum having a dialogue before meetings due to Open Meeting Law. Subcommittees are defined in Policy BDE and can be changed by the SC. It might be more effective to reduce the number of subcommittees and design a more effective structure for collaboration between meetings.

3. A thorough group review of the charter and policies might be helpful, so that all members are clear on the applicable laws, policies, powers, and duties. One SC member created a post on Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/northamptonma/posts/10161006930289016>, to criticize a local civics group as not being progressive. That itself might be considered playing politics rather than representing the whole community and against the Policy BCA, the Code of Ethics. In one of the deep comments within the same post, when a resident points out one might be violating the code of ethics, the member states, "Are you aware that MASC is a non profit whose 'code of ethics' is not law nor is it adopted by the school committee? I'd also love to hear how posting this article is somehow a violation of such 'ethics.' You are a smart guy, I'm sure you can explain." Screenshot with the names of the parties redacted is below. My understanding from talking with a school employee is that the MASC code of ethics has been adopted and is in effect as BCA since 2003. It would be helpful for the SC to come to an agreement about these questions.

SC member Author

thanks. Are you aware that MASC is a non profit whose "code of ethics" is not law nor is it adopted by the school committee? I'd also love to hear how posting this article is somehow a violation of such "ethics." You are a smart guy, I'm sure you can explain.

4. Lastly, I understand that Policy KCB allows for community members to take more active roles and may be invited as advisors. Based on my experience as an English learner, a Korean-American who was born in the United States but spent his childhood in South Korea, and experience in both private and public sectors in IT and customer support, along with others, I offer to take a more active role if the Committee sees my role appropriate and helpful. I can offer a more detailed list of my experiences later in another email if you would like.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,  
Nathan Chung  
Northampton Resident