

Ithaca SEPTA Code of Conduct

The Ithaca SEPTA has adopted this Code of Conduct to ensure the smooth and effective functioning of the organization. This Code of Conduct applies to the conduct of all SEPTA business, in meetings or otherwise. According to the NYS PTA Resource Guide (Section 7, p.1), “In practice, a unit’s bylaws are designed to help the group function in an orderly manner.” Without order at a meeting or appropriate behavior in the conduct of other business, we cannot effectively take up the business we want to and need to accomplish.

When there is a question or issue not specifically addressed in the bylaws, Article XIV of the SEPTA Bylaws (p. 13) indicates “the rules contained in the current edition of Roberts Rules of Order Newly Revised shall govern the national PTA and its constituent associations in all cases in which they are applicable, ...”

The regulation of the conduct of business in SEPTA general membership and committee meetings is the function of rules of order. Rules of order for the SEPTA meetings are clearly specified in the bylaws as Roberts Rules of Order Newly Revised, current edition (i.e., 11th edition).

Organizational Values

- SEPTA is committed to working collaboratively with ICSD staff, administrators, and elected officials in support of its mission.
- SEPTA members must support positive, collaborative relationships between the Unit and ICSD staff, administrators, and elected officials.
- SEPTA welcomes participants of diverse backgrounds, cultures, and perspectives.
- All members will respect differences in opinions, work to understand differences in perspectives, and attempt in a respectful manner to work out any disagreements on substantive issues under consideration that may occur.
- Members will behave in a respectful manner toward other members.

Member Responsibilities & Code of Conduct

- All members must pay dues as stipulated in the by-laws. Only individuals in good standing are allowed to participate in the business SEPTA. This includes being able to put forward motions, vote at a general membership meeting, or participate as a member of a committee.
- All members will respect the rules of governance within the Unit, including the requirement that all communications on behalf of SEPTA be authorized by the Executive Committee. All public electronic postings and all other written and spoken communication that represent the views or positions of SEPTA must be explicitly authorized by the Executive Committee in accordance with the Ithaca SEPTA Social Media Policy.

- No member shall undertake any action that could be construed by a reasonable person to subvert the integrity, respectability, or mission of the SEPTA organization or impugn the integrity of an officer or of the organization..
- No member shall make a false allegation of misconduct or malfeasance against an officer of the Unit.
- All members will respect the fact that SEPTA is a volunteer organization and will refrain from unnecessary infringements on members' time with frivolous requests or pursuits of information.
- All members will respect and adhere to the PTA standard "chain of command."

Decorum in Debate (RRO, 11th ed., p. 392-394):

In SEPTA meetings, all members will:

- Confine remarks to the merits of the pending question.
- Refrain from attacking a member's motives.
- Address all remarks through the chair.
- Avoid the use of member's names as much as possible.
- Refrain from speaking adversely on a prior action not pending.
- Refrain from speaking against one's own motion. "If a member changes his mind while the motion he/she made is pending, he/she can, in effect, advise the assembly of this by asking permission to withdraw the motion. (RRO, section 43, p. 393)."
- Refrain from reading from reports, quotations, etc. Members may do so with permission or if there is no objection from any member. "Reading short, printed extracts in debate is permitted...so long as the privilege is not abused. (RRO section 43, p. 393)."
- Refrain from disturbing the assembly.

Breaches in Conduct (RRO, 11th ed., p. 645-649)

- The following behaviors are recognized in Robert's Rules of Order as breaches in conduct by a member:
 1. All persons present at a meeting have an obligation to obey the legitimate orders of the presiding officer.
 2. When debating the merits of a pending question, a member shall confine his/her remarks to the pending question.
 3. In a meeting, members will only speak when recognized and given the floor by the presiding officer.
 4. All remarks during debate of a pending question must be addressed to the chair of the meeting.

5. Repeatedly speaking out of turn (i.e., speaking when not recognized by the chair), repeatedly questioning the motives of other members who are mentioned by name, uttering profanity or abusive comments are strictly prohibited.
6. Speaking on completely irrelevant matters in debate is strictly prohibited.

Breaches outside of meetings (RRO, 11th ed., p. 649-650):

1. Members shall not misrepresent themselves as speaking for or on behalf of the association or organization.
2. Members shall not misrepresent the organization to others or the public in such a manner as to damage the organization's name, work, or reputation.
3. Members shall not disregard the PTA chain of command for written or email communications.
4. Members shall not verbally abuse or make disrespectful comments directed at an official representative of the unit.
5. Members shall not step outside the delineated boundaries of a role or task engaged in on behalf of the organization, the boundaries of which have been specified by and with the approval of the executive board or committee chair.

Sanctions

- Infringements of the code of conduct will be called to the attention of the SEPTA president(s) and the Executive Board and steps will be taken to address these infringements.

APPENDIX 1: SEPTA MEETING NORMS

The Chair of each SEPTA meeting shall remind attendees of the following meeting norms, at the start of each meeting.

- Begin and end meetings on time.
- Share the floor.
- Raise your hand before speaking; the Chair will recognize individuals waiting to speak. Speak respectfully; no interruptions or personal attacks. Support the facilitators' efforts to moderate discussion.
- Keep comments to the subject at hand. Topics outside the agenda will be documented and placed in the Parking Lot for a later time.
- Conduct group business (issues that may affect many children) in front of the whole group. Conduct personal business (specific details about issues relating to one child's/family's experience) in small group discussion or outside of the meeting.
- Hold side comments and conversations until after the meeting.
- Only current SEPTA members may vote and participate in discussions pertaining to a topic being voted on.
- Contribute to thoughtful discussions that are guided by SEPTA's mission and focused on students.

APPENDIX 2: STEPS FOR ADDRESSING BREACHES IN CONDUCT DURING A MEETING (RRO, 11th ed., p. 287-288):

1. "For Minor Breaches of order, simply remind the member of the proper way to do things.
2. If a member ignores a warning, the chair may say, "The member will come to order and sit down."
3. If a member persists past a warning, the chair may ask the secretary to record the breach in the minutes. Once this is done, the chair can then take direct official action against the member by *naming the member* and saying something like, "Mr. so-and-so, the chair has asked you now three times to refrain from *X action*, yet you persist in refusing to obey the orders of the chair and continue in your conduct in a manner wholly unacceptable to the chair and the assembly." The chair may then demand an apology, or even ask the member to leave.

Hopefully, the member apologizes and sits down, the chair accepts the apology and continues with the meeting.

4. The last option for the chair is to ask the group what to do: should the member be censured (i.e., officially reprimanded), removed from the meeting until he/she apologizes, or expelled from membership? If the situation has gone this far, the chair may say, "Members, the chair is at wits' end. I regret to put the question now before you, but I find I must prepare you to speak to the question of whether Mr. so-and-so shall be removed from the meeting. Before we consider the question, however, I ask Mr. so-and-so, Sir, do you wish to make a statement to the membership before I place the question on your removal?" If the member cannot behave in a meeting, you do not have to allow him to continue his membership. Terminating his membership, however, requires a two-thirds vote. All other remedies above, if put to the membership, just require a majority vote. The vote can be taken by ballot."

Adopted: 2/13/2015