



THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
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October 27, 2026

VIA EMAIL ONLY

Katherine Hayes
[REDACTED]

RE: Open Meeting Law Complaint

Dear Katherine Hayes:

This office received your complaint on December 28, 2025,¹ alleging that the Sudbury School Committee (the “Committee”) violated the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §§ 18-25. The complaint was originally filed with the Committee on November 3. Attorney Jenifer King responded to the complaint, on behalf of the Committee, by letter dated November 17. The complaint alleges that during an October 6 meeting, the Committee indicated that it would take one more comment during a public comment period, after being instructed that more than one person wanted to make a comment. Further, the complaint alleges that the meeting ended with five minutes of public comment time left and doing so denied community members the opportunity to address the Committee and exercise their constitutional right to free speech. For the following reasons, we decline to review this complaint.

The Division of Open Government’s review concerns compliance with the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §§ 18-25. We do not review allegations that the First Amendment has been violated. See OML Declination 5-13-2026 (Lanesborough Select Board); OML Declination 6-3-2025 (Worcester City Council); OML Declination 4-25-2024 (Westwood Charter Review Committee). The Open Meeting Law does not require that a public body allow public participation. Under the Open Meeting Law, the chair of the public body has discretion to decide whether to permit public comment and the Open Meeting Law gives clear authority to the chair to conduct the meeting and to regulate who may speak to the body. See G.L. c. 30A, § 20(g) (“[n]o person shall address a meeting of a public body without permission of the chair, and all persons shall, at the request of the chair be silent.”); see also OML Declination 5-13-2026 (Lanesborough Select Board); OML 2024-185.² Indeed, if public participation is permitted, the

¹ All dates referenced after this are in the year 2025, unless otherwise stated.

² Open Meeting Law determinations may be found at the Attorney General’s website, <https://www.mass.gov/the-open-meeting-law>.

chair may determine the method for receiving public comment, who may speak or otherwise participate during a meeting, and may set limitations on participation. See OML 2020-114; OML 2017-189. An abrupt ending to a public comment period does not violate the Open Meeting Law. See OML 2022-115.³ Even assuming the allegations raised in your complaint were true, they would not constitute a violation of the Open Meeting Law. Therefore, we decline to review this complaint.⁴

We now consider this matter closed. Please feel free to contact the Division at (617) 963-2540 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Nicholas Cantrell
Assistant Attorney General
Division of Open Government

cc: Jennifer F. King, Esq. – By email only: Jennifer.King@VDHBoston.com
Karyn Jones, Chair, Sudbury School Committee– By email only: school-
committee@sudbury.k12.ma.us.
Lisa David, Sudbury Town Clerk – By email only: clerk@sudbury.ma.us

³ We note that although the Open Meeting Law does not require public bodies to allow public comment or questions during meetings, we encourage public bodies to allow for as much public participation as time and circumstances permit. See OML 2019-120; OML 2015-12; OML 2014-129; OML 2012-59.

⁴ The request for review you submitted raises additional allegations that were not raised in the original complaint. We do not review allegations that are not raised in the complaint or that are outside the scope of the Open Meeting Law. See OML Declination 5-25-2023 (Westminster Planning Board), n.2.