**Plattsmouth Board of Education**

**Operating Principles**

1. The Board of Education is convened to establish and maintain an educational program that meets the needs of youth in the Plattsmouth community, to ensure sound fiscal management of the district’s assets, and to uphold all laws and regulations governing school districts in the State of Nebraska.
2. The two items that are the sole responsibility of the Board of Education are: hiring and evaluation of the superintendent, and adoption of Board policies. The superintendent is evaluated in December of each year (A first year superintendent must be evaluated two times during the first year of employment, once each semester.) Board policies must be reviewed annually. The Board works cooperatively with the superintendent to develop the budget and determine the appropriate tax asking.
3. The Board develops annual goals to guide their work and the work of the district.
4. All meetings involving five or more Board members at which school business is discussed or action taken must be posted or advertised for a minimum of three days. An agenda for each meeting shall be prepared and made available to the public. Only emergency items may be added to the agenda 24-hours prior to the meeting. An emergency item must be triggered by an unforeseen or unanticipated event, and cannot wait for the required publication of a special meeting.
5. The Board conducts its meetings in public. However, it is not a public meeting per se in that the input of the public is restricted to:
   1. addressing the board during a brief time set aside for delegates,
   2. given explicit permission by the president of the Board to speak to an agenda item, or
   3. using the Board’s procedure for placing an item on the board’s agenda.

All meetings shall be open to the public in accordance to state statutes §84-1408 through §84-1414.

1. Robert’s Rules of Order for small groups will be observed to ensure efficient use of time at business meetings. Appendix A provides a summary of the most frequently used Rules of Order.
2. The Board shall conduct a minimum of one monthly business meeting on or before the third Monday of each month. Business meetings typically are scheduled for the second Monday of each month. Additional meetings may be convened as needed.
3. The superintendent will develop an agenda for all special and business meetings in cooperation with the Board President.
   1. The business meeting agenda will include a consent agenda. The consent agenda will include the following items:
      1. Approval of Agenda
      2. Approval of Board Meeting Minutes
      3. Approval of Treasurer’s Report
      4. Review of the Control Budget
      5. Approval of Claims and Transfers
      6. Approval of Certificated Hires
      7. Approval of Resignations
      8. Approval of Foreign Exchange Student Enrollments
   2. Board members are encouraged to request clarification of consent agenda items prior to a board meeting by calling the business manager or visiting with the superintendent or Board president. If clarification leads to a desire to discuss the item with the Board as a whole, the Board member will make a motion to remove the item from the consent agenda prior to a motion being made for consent agenda adoption. The motion shall request that the item in questions receive consideration as a separate action item.
4. Closed sessions are allowed only to:
   1. Develop strategies for collective bargaining, real estate purchases, pending or imminent (actual claim or threat has been made) litigation;
   2. Discussing deployment of security personnel or devices;
   3. Investigative proceedings regarding allegations of criminal misconduct; or
   4. Evaluate job performance of a person when necessary to prevent needless injury to the reputation of a person and if such person has NOT requested a public meeting.

A motion is made and seconded to go into closed session to discuss a defined topic. The topic, the time of the action, and the roll call vote results shall be recorded in the minutes. No formal action can be taken in closed session. The president declares the closed session ended. The ending time is recorded in the minutes. Any formal action of the Board shall be made when the Board is back in open session. All members of the Board must be allowed into a closed session. Others may attend only when invited by the board.

1. The work of the Board generally begins in committee. The board has three standing committees: Curriculum, Finance, and Operations. A Negotiations committee is convened to negotiate with the Plattsmouth Education Association for the Master Agreement with Teachers. A Nominating committee is convened to prepare a ballot for election of board officers. The president has the privilege of appointing a committee when necessary to address specific needs. Committee members are expected to gain a deep understanding of the issue at hand, to work with the superintendent to gather and prepare materials for consideration by the whole Board, and to make a recommendation for board action when needed. In this way, efficiency is increased and board members are not required to find the time and energy to develop in depth knowledge for every single issue that comes before the board. Efforts are made to honor the existing knowledge and desires of board members in making committee appointments.
2. Workshops are held prior to each business meeting. Workshops are open to the public (more than five members present); however, no formal action is allowed during a Board workshop. Information is shared and discussions of issues under consideration by the board are addressed in workshops.
3. Contentious issues can cause strong emotions among board members. Because meetings are held in the public, and often with media present, Board members are encouraged to be conscious of their body language and choice of words. When Board members show respect for one another’s diversity and opinions, the Board works more effectively and the focus of the district can be on education rather than on the relationships among Board members. A general rule of thumb is that there should be no surprises arising at a Board meeting. Informal conversations with the superintendent or Board president before a meeting is convened will ensure that all information needed to thoroughly address an issue is available. However, it is better to ask a question for clarification rather to than to feel as though you are uninformed about all aspects of an issue upon which you are being asked to vote.
4. District administrators and building principals are usually in attendance at business meetings to provide insights regarding agenda items should the Board have specific questions for them. Administrators also provide status reports to the Board.
5. Serving as a Board member means working with the public. Board members understand that it is their responsibility to advocate positively for the students, the employees and the district as a whole. In order to be effective in this work, board members are expected to understand issues well enough to help the public understand and support the school’s programs.
6. Handling public and parents complaints can be challenging. The Board is expected to serve as an unbiased “jury” in issues of discipline. In order to maintain an unbiased disposition, it is important for board members to help the public understand the procedures that are in place to ensure confidentiality, and to ensure prompt and appropriate corrective action. This process is essentially:
   1. the parent makes an appointment to talk with the student’s teacher or coach, if not satisfied with the result,
   2. the parent talks to the AD or principal, if not satisfied,
   3. the parent then talks to the superintendent, if not satisfied,
   4. the parent talks to the formally convened board.

While this sounds simple, it is not easy. It is difficult in the grocery store, on the golf course, and during late night phone calls with irate parents. Many angry people want instant gratification. “I elected you, you better fix it.” Reactionary responses often lead to unintended consequences due to incomplete understanding of the larger picture. The time lag that accompanies a prescribed process is actually a safeguard for the wisdom of calm consideration.

1. Board members are only empowered when they are sitting in a properly convened board meeting. Board action is a democratic process, meaning that the majority vote becomes the formal action. Board members are expected to support board decisions, even if their opinion/vote did not prevail. The public sometimes forgets that you are not serving in your official capacity when you are in the community. “A Board member said…” can become a misrepresentation of a personal opinion, and can be an unintended reflection upon the district as a whole. Due diligence is encouraged.
2. Board communications with one another and to the superintendent via email should be sent to all members of the board and superintendent. All communications are subject to public review if requested.
3. Board members who volunteer in the schools create a significant challenge for themselves, for the teachers in the building, and for the administrators in the building. There is a temptation to circumvent established communication systems. This is not to say that volunteering is prohibited, only that a Board member needs to be aware of the challenges presented. The president of the Board reserves the right to suggest that the Board member who serves as a volunteer may inadvertently be an interruption of the educational program.
4. The Board’s executive committee (Board officers) will annually review the Board’s operating principles.

**Appendix A**

**Common Meeting Motions**

Robert’s Rules of Order are followed when the Board of Education is in session. Some exceptions to Robert’s Rules include: the chairperson may make motions and participate in discussion and may vote on motions; rules governing the motion to reconsider are relaxed; members are to be recognized by the Chair before speaking but need not rise to speak; Occasionally, state statutes are different from Robert’s Rules. State statute is followed with those differences arise.

Fundamentals of parliamentary procedure:

One thing at a time

* Courtesy to all
* Justice to all
* The rule of the majority
* The rights of the minority
* Partiality towards none

Meetings are the work of the Board. The superintendent is present to advise and provide information, not to “run” the meeting.

Business Meetings are called to order with roll call.

A consent agenda is prepared for business meetings. Routine matters are included in the consent agenda. The purpose of the consent agenda is to save time for matters that are not routine. The consent agenda requires a motion, a second, usually is not debated, and a roll call vote. If a member wants an item removed from the consent agenda to allow for full board debate, they may make a motion to remove the item from the agenda and place it as an action item. This would occur prior to the motion for approval of the consent agenda. The motion to make a consent agenda item an action item requires a second, and a majority vote. If the motion to approve the consent agenda has already been made and seconded, a motion to amend the main motion to include removing the specific item can be made. The motion to amend requires a second and a majority vote, and takes place prior to a vote on the main motion to approve the consent agenda, i.e., two votes are required – one for the amendment, and one for the main motion.

Action Items are briefly presented (read) to the Board by the chair (or deferred to the superintendent). A motion and a second is required before discussion is allowable.

Motion dialogue would go like this –

Member: “I move that…”

Seconder: “I second that motion.”

Chair: “It is moved and seconded that… Is there any discussion?” (The person making the motion has the right to speak first to the question before the board or to defer that privilege. A member can vote against his/her motion, but typically will not speak against it. The maker of a motion may withdraw the motion at any time prior to the chair’s restatement of the motion for the vote.)

A member can call for a vote on the motion at any time during debate by saying, “I call for the previous question.” A vote to call the question requires a 2/3’s majority vote (six or nine board members). An affirmative vote then brings the motion to an immediate vote.

Some motions require the use of precise language. Precise language is typically suggested by the superintendent as a guide for Board members to use if they choose. Often the language will be in the form of a Resolution. The motion then becomes: “I move to adopt resolution #### to approve the 2004-05 General Fund Budget.” The motion requires a second. The resolution is read either as the agenda item is introduced, or prior to a vote of the Board.

Most motions require a majority vote of the Board to prevail. For a nine-member Board, that means five votes. If members are missing, it is typically a majority of the seated board. Some motions require a majority vote of the elected board (five members) in accordance with statute. Board members will be advised far ahead of time when these types of issues are coming to the Board. When these types of issues are before the Board, members are expected to make every effort to be in attendance for the vote.

What if you are not ready to take a vote on the issue before the Board? Options include:

Postpone Indefinitely – This motion kills the main motion if it is adopted. This motion is used when the Board does not wish to take a position on the main motion. It is a debatable motion that cannot be amended and requires a majority vote.

Postpone Definitely – This motion puts off consideration of a pending motion to a more convenient time, such as when the Board has more information. This motion insures that the issue will come back before the Board at the next regular meeting. The motion is debatable, can be amended, and requires a majority vote. A motion cannot be postponed beyond the next regular meeting, does not apply to reports or action that are required by policy to occur at a specific time, e.g. election of officers.

Lay on the Table – This motion allows the board to consider another issue first and then return to the issue before it.

What if you don’t like the action that the Board has just taken?

Motion to Reconsider – This motion is to prevent ill-advised or hasty action by the Board. The motion can be made by anyone who did not vote on the losing side – anyone who didn’t vote, who was absent, or who voted on the winning (prevailing side).

Reviewed: June 10, 2013, June 10, 2014, June 8, 2015, June 6, 2016, June 12, 2017, June 25, 2018, July 8, 2019, July 13, 2020, July 12, 2021, July 11, 2022, June 12, 2023, July 15, 2024