



Old Rochester Regional School Committee Policy Subcommittee Meeting Minutes

March 8, 2023 AT 4:30 p.m.

ZOOM LINK:

<https://oldrochesterorg.zoom.us/j/91321516061?pwd=TmZSd3NLVk4zaXpSWFdaWk4rcTdrdz09>

Meeting ID: 913 2151 6061

Passcode: 515488

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Mary Beauregard (in-person), Marion School Committee, Katherine Duggan (remote), Rochester School Committee, Frances-Feliz Kearns (in-person), ORR School Committee, Cristin Cowles (remote), Mattapoisett School Committee, and Joseph Pires (remote), ORR School Committee

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT: Margaret McSweeny

ADMINISTRATIVE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Michael Nelson, Superintendent of Schools

MEETING TO ORDER at 4:31 p.m. by Ms. Kearns

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: October 25, 2022 and December 21, 2022

Motion to approve the minutes from October 25, 2022 by Ms. Beauregard

Second by Ms. Kearns

ROLL CALL: Beauregard: yes, Duggan: yes, Kearns: yes, Cowles: yes, Pires: yes

Motion to approve the minutes from December 21, 2022 by Ms. Beauregard

Second by Ms. Kearns

ROLL CALL: Beauregard: yes, Duggan: yes, Kearns: yes, Cowles: yes, Pires: yes

2. Review of Open Meeting Law Complaint(s) –

Superintendent Nelson made the following statement:

On February 14th - we received three open meeting law complaints from Ms. Kathleen LeClair of Mattapoisett. The first complaint (that was updated on February 16th) will need to be responded to by the Marion, Mattapoisett, Old Rochester, and Rochester school committees. The second complaint is addressed to the policy subcommittee and will require that they respond. And the third complaint is addressed specifically to this committee regarding subcommittee minutes. As a result, this subcommittee is required to respond to the complaint within 14 business days or within the extension period. I have shared the complaint with this committee in their entirety for your review and reference. My recommendation is for this committee to vote to delegate the responsibility to respond to the complainant to legal counsel through the superintendent and provide a copy of the response to the Attorney General within the required timeline.

Motion by Ms. Kearns to delegate the responsibility to respond to the complainant to legal counsel through the Superintendent.

Seconded by Ms. Beauregard

ROLL CALL: Beauregard: yes, Duggan: yes, Kearns: yes, Cowles: yes, Pires: yes

3. Policy BEDH – Public Comment at School Committee Meetings –Reviewed at the Joint School Committee on January 19, 2023 and referred back to the Policy Subcommittee.

A Joint School Committee member had the following feedback: 1) The comments being made by chairs to open and close public comments may be in the spirit of the policy but language the chairs are using do not appear anywhere in the policy itself. I think this is confusing and that chairs should derive their power from the policy not something else. Examples: I know the Chairs say something about needing to be recognized in order to make a comment. That's not in the policy clearly. Comments have also been made by chairs to include written comments in the

public record, that authority is also not clearly defined in the policy. I've suggested some proposed clarifying changes in blue. 2) I'm trying to understand if there is a legal basis or need to limit the time spent on public comments. I'm of the opinion that if a voter or concerned parent takes time out of their day to be at this meeting and wants to address the committee they should have the ability to do so. I understand that for the vast majority of meetings 30 minutes is likely long enough but the issue at our last joint school committee meeting didn't need to escalate to the levels it did and extending from 15 to 30 minutes wouldn't have alleviated that issue. I believe committee members should be able to motion and by majority vote extend time spent on public comment when the need arises. 3) I also believe item 7 proposed to be added to the policy will be viewed negatively in the community in light of recent events. I think the language we're using is vague and unclear here and I understand it was taken from MGL but the language like "continues to disrupt" in it implies that MGL might outline what constitutes a disruption and have other clarifying portions to it that are missing from the context here. I'd like to clarify the language.

The subcommittee members reviewed BEDH and the proposed changes.

Ms. Duggan expressed that item #1 and item #2 could be more consistent rather than one being extended by motion and majority vote and two being extended by the Chair. Ms. Cowles agreed that the collective majority might be the best option in both scenarios. Mr. Pires prefers how the policy is currently revised, differentiating the two. Ms. Kearns asked what would be an extenuating circumstance, and if it was extended does that eat into the total thirty minutes allowed for public comment. Ms. Cowles stated the extenuating circumstance would be up to the chair and presumably would let the speaker know "you have two more minutes". She continued that her understanding is that the extension would be part of the thirty minutes. The subcommittee decided that keeping item #1 and #2 as proposed in the revisions is best to differentiate and that the entire committee would be able to make a motion to extend the 30-minute timeframe, but the Chair can extend the speaker's three (3) minute timeframe rather than the committee voting on each speaker.

The subcommittee discussed item #5 in the policy and that written comments would automatically be included in the meeting minutes, not at the Chair's discretion as the revision proposed. Superintendent Nelson confirmed that once a community member hands himself or the Chair remarks, it becomes public record in the minutes.

The subcommittee also discussed item #7 in policy BEDH. Ms. Cowles commented that the policy does not need to qualify the disruption because the law is more broad. The subcommittee revised the language in the first sentence of item #7 to state "If an attendee continues to disrupt the meeting after a clear warning, such as by speaking when not recognized or after public comments have concluded, the Chair has the authority to order that person to leave".

Motion to accept BEDH Public Comment at School Committee Meetings with the proposed amendments by Ms. Beauregard

Second by Mr. Pires

ROLL CALL: Beauregard: yes, Duggan: yes, Kearns: yes, Cowles: yes, Pires: yes

4. Review Policy JFBB - School Choice, JFBB-1 – School Choice and JFBB-R School Choice Procedures

Mr. Nelson explained that JFBB – School Choice is our current policy which addresses the Old Rochester Regional School District and the Mattapoissett School District admitting school choice students. He explained that MASC also has policy JFBB-1 School Choice for districts that do not participate in school choice. As we are in a unique situation with our four districts, he recommended to the Policy Subcommittee that they review JFBB-1 to differentiate Marion and Rochester as our school districts that do not participate in School Choice at this time. These policies would be reviewed annually as needed if the School Committee for each district votes to change School Choice.

The subcommittee reviewed JFBB-School Choice and proposed removing the last line "Each year, the school districts of Superintendent Union #55 will vote on participation in the School Choice program."

Motion to accept JFBB – School Choice with the proposed amendment by Ms. Kearns

Second by Ms. Beauregard

ROLL CALL: Beauregard: yes, Duggan: yes, Kearns: yes, Cowles: yes, Pires: yes

The subcommittee discussed JFBB-1 School Choice. Recommendations were made to strike from the first paragraph “This decision must be reaffirmed annually prior to June 1st by a vote of the School Committee following a public hearing” as this information is included in the policy in item #2 as well. The committee discussed and agreed that the verbiage of item #4 in the policy and the footer of the policy should match policy JFBB School Choice for consistency but omit #4a from JFBB (Any sibling of a student already enrolled in the receiving district shall receive priority for admission to said district) as it does not apply in JFBB-1 School Choice because the policy states the district(s) are not participating in School Choice.

Motion to accept JFBB-1 – School Choice with the proposed changes as discussed by Ms. Kearns

Second by Ms. Beauregard

ROLL CALL: Beauregard: yes, Duggan: yes, Kearns: yes, Cowles: yes, Pires: yes

Lastly, the Policy Subcommittee reviewed JFBB-R School Choice Procedures. Superintendent Nelson explained the redlined procedures that were reviewed by Principal Devoll and Principal Coellner. The subcommittee reviewed striking the first line “The Superintendent and School Committee Chairperson will place the option of School Choice on the May agenda for consideration.” In the next line, the proposed change is reporting about School Choice in the March school committee meetings instead of May. Next, the proposed changes include stating that non-resident students can apply for openings beginning March 1 instead of April 1. The proposed procedures include adding “the first lottery will occur no later than May 1”. The proposed changes remove the Principal reviewing records including attendance and discipline as this is a blind lottery. Lastly, the procedures reflect changing notification from applicants in writing of their acceptance to the Principals to “within two weeks of notification” rather than “by the end of April”.

Motion to accept JFBB-R – School Choice Procedures revisions as presented by Ms. Beauregard

Second by Mr. Pires

ROLL CALL: Beauregard: yes, Duggan: yes, Kearns: yes, Cowles: yes, Pires: yes

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn at 5:22 p.m. by Ms. Kearns

Second by Ms. Beauregard

ROLL CALL: Beauregard: yes, Duggan: yes, Kearns: yes, Cowles: yes, Pires: yes