



72 Pilgrim Road, Pembroke, MA 02359
www.pembrokek12.org
pembroke@pembrokek12.org

PEMBROKE SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Tuesday, January 16, 2024
Pembroke High School Auditorium

Call to Order

Mrs. Bollinger called the meeting to order at 6:40 p.m.

Present from Administration: Erin Obey, Superintendent; Marybeth Brust, Assistant Superintendent; Jessica DeLorenzo, Director of Student Services

Present from Committee: Susan Bollinger, Chair; Allison Glennon, Clerk; Michael Quinn and Patrick Chilcott
Absent: David Boyle, Vice Chair

Pledge of Allegiance

Rescheduled - Pack 105

Public Comment

None

Acknowledge & Schedule Visitors

Mrs. Bollinger welcomed the audience members and outlined the ground rules for public comments respectful dialogue during public comments on general topics and agenda items.

Adjustments to the Agenda

None

Communications

a) Article regarding the status of Massachusetts' FY24 budget and potential 9C Cuts

Mrs. Obey said the committee should have a conversation about the potential 9C cuts that are associated with the FY24 budget. This discussion will take place at a joint budget subcommittee meeting tomorrow, which will include two members of the Selectboard. After the meeting, Mr. Chilcott and Mrs. Bollinger will bring back the outcomes of the discussion to the next full School Committee.

Consideration for Approval: School Committee Meeting Minutes of January 2, 2024

Mrs. Glennon pointed out a typo on page 2.

VOTE: On a motion made by Allison Glennon and seconded by Patrick Chilcott, it was unanimously voted to approve the meeting minutes of January 2, 2024 as amended.

Voting Yes: Susan Bollinger, Allison Glennon, Michael Quinn and Patrick Chilcott

Voting No: none

Abstaining: none

Absent: David Boyle

Superintendent's Report

Discussion Regarding the need to create a new policy regarding political/social advocacy in the classroom

Mrs. Bollinger said she would like to talk about the reason why this discussion is taking place today. Recent social media posts have mischaracterized and she understands why people are angry, however, there are a few things to keep

in mind. First, this is a discussion only about whether the school committee should change the policy, and if so, how it should be changed. She said she has outlined some draft ideas that she believes could work and she is coming to her fellow school committee members for input based on parent and student feedback from the last three years since she's been on the committee. She said she is not suggesting an overall ban on pride flags. She emphasized that she is not proposing to ban any specific clothing items such as flags, pins, t-shirts, or any other type of clothing that students may want to wear. In fact, her draft policy proposal allows for students to display flags associated with their clubs in common areas of the school. She wants to make it clear that students are not prohibited from advocating for themselves and she is not against the LGBTQ+ community; she has members of the LGBTQ+ community in her own family whom she loves very much. She would never propose anything that would make them feel undervalued. Her goal is to create a safe and supportive classroom for all students. Her suggested policy change is coming from a place of love for all students, not hate. It is important to recognize that our teachers and administrators hold a position of authority over our students. Therefore, any instruction they give to students is taken very seriously, and rightly so. However, it is essential not to misuse this authority by giving ideological directives. Instead, teachers should focus on teaching students how to think and not what to think.

Mrs. Bollinger said she feels that many teachers are displaying posters and flags in their classrooms to advocate for various causes such as Coexist, Black Lives Matter, and Don't Tread on Me. Some parents have raised concerns about Awareness Days where staff distribute pins, buttons, or stickers to students to support a specific cause. During high school awareness days, some students felt pressured by teachers and staff to wear certain colored shirts or pins to show support for the cause. Teachers and staff also wore these pins and shirts. When parents tried to discuss their concerns with teachers and administrators, they were met with judgment. Several parents have said their students felt uncomfortable with various political symbols in the classroom. Students in religious groups felt that the teacher was judging their work for holding different views from them. This became more about LGBTQ+ causes because the examples she was given from parents and students were mostly around teacher advocacy for LGBTQ+ issues. No student should ever know how their teacher feels about any political or controversial issue. Teachers should be neutral and be able to present all sides of an issue, not just the side they agree with. We must establish clear boundaries to ensure that teachers do not inadvertently influence their students. The district has a policy in place regarding political and controversial issues in the classroom, Policy 4.41 which is being recoded to IMB. Mrs. Bollinger read the section relating to teacher-planned classroom discussions. She also noted that the Supreme Court in *Garcetti vs Sabalos* in 2006 ruled that statements public employees make as part of their official duties are not protected under the First Amendment. Although there is a policy in place it's become clear that teachers and administrators don't believe that this is a political or controversial issue and that is why the policy needs to be changed. There is a laissez-faire attitude about policing such items in the classroom for fear of offending anyone in recent years and as a result teachers and administrators feel that they can and should advocate for certain marginalized groups so that they don't appear complacent. Mrs. Bollinger said she recently took a tour of all five buildings and some of the symbols and flags seen in classrooms at every school including Coexist, Black Lives Matter, Pride Flag and Don't Tread on Me. There is a place for all of these symbols but not in the public school classroom. This policy is not about taking away the opportunity for students to be advocates for their causes but it should be about all students feeling comfortable. in the classroom, no matter what the teacher's politics are. School should be a safe space for all students, but sometimes when we go a little too far to make it safe for one group, we're making it unsafe for another.

Mrs. Glennon said as a school committee, it is our responsibility to set a good example for students. Our behavior and choice of words have a significant impact on them. This pains me deeply and I cannot find the right words to express it. When I was elected in May, I committed to prioritize the best interests of the town of Pembroke, including its financial well-being. Unfortunately, the policy that is being proposed now is not in line with that commitment. If we proceed with this policy, we could potentially expose the district to civil rights and workplace lawsuits. Given the town and schools' already difficult financial situation, we cannot afford to go down this path. It will reflect poorly on our town, causing housing values to plummet and discouraging families from moving here.

Also, implementing this policy could result in a significant increase in taxes to pay for legal battles. In speaking with our school attorney yesterday, he confirmed that the policy draft puts the school at a high risk of violating civil rights for both students and teachers. Therefore, it makes no sense to proceed with this policy. It poses a significant risk to the town and its residents, both financially and reputationally. She added it breaks my heart to think of what this policy and discussion is doing to our students, parents and staff, this is so damaging.

We, as a school committee have to follow the same laws governing EEOC reasonable accommodations for an employee's religious beliefs or practices. Unless doing so would cause more than a minimal burden on the operations of the employer's business. Removing the pride flag and other flags does not meet a reasonable accommodation for religious discrimination for students and staff. Additionally, what is being targeted here is the ability of teachers to help students

feel safe in the learning environment. Removal of the flag would be detrimental to the learning environment. When students fear they cannot be safe they will be unable to focus on learning and their grades could suffer as well as their mental health.

LGBTQ+ young are more than four times as likely to attempt suicide than their peers; this is from the Trevor Project. This is all about the Pride Flag, no other subject has been so extensively discussed in the past two Policy Subcommittee meetings regarding this policy. We have current policies in place covering controversial and political issues. We have the school handbook and the bullying prevention and intervention plan that lays out procedures to be followed. There is also Titan Talk on our website for making reports.

Mr. Quinn said I'd like to remind all members of the school committee and everyone here that we're elected to represent all the students. Not just those that we most agree with or those whose parents are friends of ours. We have to represent everyone and find a way to be fair. I had hoped the Policy Subcommittee would meet somewhere in the middle with this draft policy and come to a conclusion that's fair for everyone. The best policies are made when there's open discussion, there's some give and take, and there's some negotiations, and I don't believe that happened in with this Subcommittee. We must balance policy development with teachers' and staff's rights. Their job is hard, and we appreciate their efforts. Also, we have a duty to make the best decisions for the town and carefully evaluate the potential unintended consequences of our decisions. There are many factors to consider, and we cannot simply follow our personal preferences. It's not easy to make a decision while taking into account all the various stakeholders. I'm looking forward to hearing from the Pembroke community and having an open discussion with my fellow school committee members so we can make the best decision for the town and the schools.

Mr. Chilcott said it is about what happens for students in Pembroke. The decisions are made to support the kids. Parents have rights to guide their children and have difficult conversations with them. The next piece is the classroom. We employ teachers and administrators to make sure that they are helping to educate our children and we need to trust them to do it. Policy is put in place to ensure there is governance over these things.

Mr. Chilcott cited two legal cases, Pickering, which says teachers' rights do not end at the doorstep to the school and it also says, however, that there is a test. A teacher cannot say whatever they want. It cannot be grossly without fact; it cannot be grossly without basis. A teacher cannot also advocate for their own financial well-being, their own contract, or their employment grievance in the classroom or to students. In Tinker V. De Moines it was decided that students retain their First Amendment rights at school as long as the students' expressive acts did not "materially or substantially interfere" with the school's operation. Mr. Chilcott said several things in the draft policy concern him. The statement that students who lead and or attend after school clubs who would like to exhibit advocacy associated with their club, including social, political, partisan, or religious, administration shall designate approved common areas for such displays. Request for such displays must be submitted in writing by a student to the principal administration and be approved by the school committee. This is not the job of the School Committee. The School Committee's jobs are to create policy, approve high level curriculum and provide a budget, not teach. Ultimately, we need to entrust the administrators to run the schools. A second concern is the creation of a file with the names of students making the requests. Another concern is the statement that students can wear jewelry, pins or flags of a nature that displays their political partisan or social policy advocacy as long as it is not insightful vulgar or disruptive to the learning environment. This may force a student to identify who they may or may not want to be. Also, the statement that staff who would like to wear jewelry or pins that represent a part of their own personal identity or culture as long as it is not done to advocate for any particular group and does not cause disruption to the learning environment in any way. Mr. Chilcott added that the committee members walked through every single room in all the buildings on MLK Jr. Day for 3.5 hours. There are no Black Lives Matter or Blue Lives Matter flags all over the place and only a small handful of Pride flags at PHS. At the middle school, there were years of Hoops for Hearts flags and support for troop stickers. When we start banning them universally there are downstream effects and consequences that we don't understand. The Attorney General has stated that the issue does not impact the learning environment and so we don't need to adjust anything. We are bringing a national agenda to Pembroke public schools and it's wrong.

Mr. Chilcott read aloud the current Policy IMB and said it is a comprehensive guideline and covers everything that has been brought up in this discussion. The policy could include the right to voice a concern anonymously and also include the right to make sure parents know there's an escalation protocol. This proposed new policy fails legal, fails kids, fails families, fails the practical, and fails the economic, there is no need for another policy.

He added that he spent 2.5 hours looking at the revenue projections of the town and it is not great, adding that if PPS got sued it could be a six-figure liability. He said this is killing the PPS brand and it will impact teacher recruitment.

Mr. Chilcott added that he has known Mrs. Bollinger for years and there is no malice on her end, she believes that what she is doing is the right thing and good for kids. She does not hate anyone.

Student Representative Lauren said she has been in Pembroke since kindergarten and has only seen a couple of Pride flags and no Black Lives Matter or Blue Lives Matter flags. She added these critical and important conversations can only happen when teachers are not limited in what they're able to advocate for. We do not need a policy that would restrict teachers' social and political rights in the classroom. This is an issue that concerns us, the students and students want teachers to be able to advocate for them.

Silas Bell a student at PHS said Pride flags and the coexist symbol are inclusive. I have been here for four years now and this is one of the most accepting places I have ever been. This school is amazing when it comes to diversity for everyone, not just LGBTQ+ or people of different skin colors, we have teachers who have different religions and are very open about it, and still can find it within their hearts to fully accept everyone. If this is passed, I believe that our school will not be as safe as it is now. He referenced the percentage of depression and suicide in the LGBTQ+ and trans populations.

Chris Regan a senior at PHS said he finds it especially troubling that in 2024 it is suggested that a symbol of community and a sense of belonging such as the pride flag shall be removed in the name of political and or social advocacy in the classroom. The pride flag has served the purpose of celebrating the LGBTQ plus community in embracing our differences. This measure goes against precedents established by the Supreme Court stating that quote, educational authorities who want to censor speech will need to show that permitting the speech would signal that the significantly interfere with the discipline needed for the school to function referring to Tinker v. Des Moines. By doing so it will send a message to the students and faculty in the LGBTQ+ community that they are not accepted here. This potential policy change is concerning as it may give rise to a slippery slope where more expressions of free speech may be restricted.

Daniel Nogueer a junior at PHS said proposing a change to the status quo, as Ms. Glennon mentioned, is not worth our time and resources. This is for the students, this affects the students, Students are saying they are going to be affected so this change shouldn't happen.

Gwynne Mueller a 4th grade at BES said she wants to see more than just the American flag and thinks the flags are good support for other kids.

Sofia Perkins said here today to discuss the inherent bigotry that comes from a policy that would ban political and social advocacy in the classroom. This generation can see with their own eyes the social injustice and atrocities that burden this country every day. I believe that this policy will only worsen the state of the Pembroke school system and will close the eyes of children entering a country that is only trying to become more diverse, accepting, and inclusive. This ban will completely diminish students' ability to speak up in the classroom. Not only will it close the eyes of new generations coming through the Pembroke school system, it will in turn make the town of Pembroke look like an uneducated, senseless town. The ban of social advocacy goes directly against the right of free speech we are all given when we are born as Americans. School is supposed to be a safe place for all students who enter.

I strongly believe that a ban like this will bring devastation to families of LGBTQ+ or POC students and their families, and will shut them out and it shows the rest of the state that we don't allow our students or teachers to speak freely.

Corina Frank a PHS student said it's mainly focused on neutrality. And, or just giving students a neutral environment to learn in. And it seems that everyone is kind of looking forward towards this idealistic version of neutrality, but when you shoot for an ideal goal, you're setting yourself up for a situation that is ignorant to reality.

And ignorant to the realistic effects of an ideal solution to a realistic problem. For me personally, I've only ever been in the Pembroke school system, and I've only ever felt supported by my teachers.

Grace Stevens a sophomore at PHS said the Portrait of a Pembroke Titan has a trait that states a Titan should embrace diversity and leverage the power to advocate for those in need. I would like to trust that the faculty of the school will see to it that the new policy aligns with these principles without breaking them. Considering the current climate and how difficult college admissions are becoming with the mental health crisis and as well as the increase in school shooters nationwide, I do question if this is the best use of the school board's time.

Ivy Pongratz a junior at PHS said I'd like to start by reminding you that this is not a ban of pride flags. This does not restrict the student's ability to advocate at all for any cause that they feel they should advocate for. It's possible that me and my sister may be the only ones who are speaking that the Pride flag is controversial and is a social and political topic. It's scary for kids to come forward and say that they disagree, which is exactly why I feel like it's so important for me to speak. I'd like to say that there are students who disagree and who are uncomfortable with the teachers putting up Pride flags in their classrooms. This is not about banning Pride flags. This doesn't restrict the students in their clubs and from their person, from representing and showing support for whatever topics they choose. This is about keeping

teachers neutral in all topics and conversations. I think that the fear of speaking out if nothing else shows that this is 100% a controversial topic.

Cora Pongratz a freshman at PHS said I think that it should be up to the parents than to teachers to be teaching kids what is right and wrong and about beliefs and identities. I think teachers should be teaching kids about what is in the curriculum and everything of that sort. It's really out of their bounds to be influencing kids in any other sort of way. I've only been in the Pembroke schools for three years. But in these three years, everyone keeps saying they've only seen a few Pride flags, but I've seen a lot. I think that a lot of people here all agree that we need equality and we need representation for everyone. But I feel like we're seeing a lot more representation for the LGBTQ+ community than anything else, which is not a bad thing. They deserve representation just as much as anyone else. But I think that there are a lot of other minorities that are not being represented that should be also represented.

Lilly Cullinane an 8th grader at PCMS said as a gay teenager, I've always seen people been able to express who they like as a straight couple in my schools, and I haven't. Seeing a little sticker on a door doesn't change who someone is or what someone believes in. It just teaches kids that they can be who they are.

Sofia Regan a 12th grader said I wanted to say something because this year I came on as bisexual and my family has been very accepting. Teachers sharing their opinions is not social or political because they're sharing with students that they can be a safe place for students who don't feel comfortable whether it be at home or with certain friends.

Elin Flashman, a parent, said I am concerned that the quality of our schools is being threatened by unnecessary policies, effectively targeting Pride flags in our schools. The schools are already facing a shortfall of about \$2 million because it costs that much more to fund the same as last year. Lawsuits will add to the shortfall. We have bigger issues to solve that require critical work of the school committee and removing pride flags is a waste of everybody's time. LGBTQ+ kids in schools are actively facing verbal physical harassment and assault. A 2021 survey of Massachusetts students, which was referenced earlier, shows that there are current and active incidents still occurring. We have heard in the past policy subcommittee discussions that there are several kids uncomfortable because their religion is against the Pride flag and they don't want to speak up because they're afraid to be called a homophobe so we should take away the Pride Flag that help students who are being harassed know it is safe. There is a greater harm here if we take away Pride Flag to the students and the learning environment. Let's not create a policy to solve unreported issues. I trust our teachers and administrations so let's allow them to do their jobs. Moving ahead with a policy that effectively focuses on removing pride flags and pins but is written so broadly that will ban staff from wearing pins in support of awareness of things like autism, disability and cancer, and more unless you are a member of that group effectively forces people to out themselves. Who is going to oversee policing this?

Tim Kennedy a teacher at Bryantville said he stands as a voice of the PTA and read the following statement:

I've been a member of the teaching staff at Bryanville Elementary School for the past 27 years.

During that time, it's been my pleasure and privilege to serve the district as an educator. Throughout the years, I've been able to bear witness to the growth of the community and the shift from being part of the Silver Lake Regional School system to taking those first steps toward creating the Pembroke Public Schools.

With that change came the responsibility of the school committee to usher in a new error for our school district. I also stand before you today as a voice of the Pembroke Teachers Association. Many decisions have been made throughout the years that have shaped our schools, and this latest conversation in regards to creating new policy has us greatly concerned as educators. After reviewing the notes from the latest subcommittee meeting, it's only strengthened our resolve to speak up about this proposal to create new language. Having listened to the explanation regarding the impetus and reasoning for the changes, it would appear that this is an undercurrent of religious beliefs that are being allowed to shape and influence the development of policies. In our estimation, this policy treads dangerously into the realm of being able to keep separate the concepts of church and state as provided by our own constitution. It also makes us question the need for such changes to the language of a policy that has served well and never required amendments. Furthermore, as educators and administrators, there's a responsibility to create a safe school climate as outlined by the safe school programs in our DESE. The regulations from Massachusetts State Rights Law, MGL Chapter 76, Section 5 states that, quote, all public school systems shall, through their curricula, encourage, respect for the human and civil rights of all individuals regardless of race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation. A policy such as the one being introduced would seem to function in contradiction to these regulations. Another concern of our centers around who would be given the power to determine which social issues are considered divisive and based upon what measures. Currently, these decisions are being made every day by the professionals working for the school district, and they've been making appropriate decisions for many years to the point that there is

no need to put into place such language for additional measures for a policy that's proven to be effective. As we educate our students on being our future leaders and the citizens that will shape tomorrow, it's imperative that we do so in a way that promotes tolerance and acceptance of others and celebrates those differences that make us all who we are. If the concept of treating all others with dignity and respect is a divisive subject, then we truly are concerned about the future of this community. Those who are privileged with the role of leadership must recognize that along with it goes the responsibility to wield that power justly as Union we find such a policy It passed where two and a half minutes so an embarrassment for the town We feel that it takes us in a direction that would make us simply question our future and consider our future employment in the community Because discrimination and tolerance towards others when masked behind policy rhetoric and values is still discrimination and intolerance

Joshua Gendreau, a parent said I think being in public school the most important thing is that everybody's included and that it's a safe space for everyone. I don't think that having a pride flag is going to do any harm to anybody. I think that it's going to help include people. In some schools there's a sticker on a door or in a classroom that'll say no bullying or safe space or no place for hate, which is a great program that like 1800 schools are part of. We're talking about making a policy that's going to take away a sign that students can look at in class during their day that makes them feel safe and included. Because it's got a rainbow or a flag or something on it that makes the teachers and the students feel included and safe, we're going to take it away. It just doesn't make sense.

Naomi Leeper a PCMS teacher said I have a few statistics on LGBTQ+ mental health and some of them have already been stated. Two important ones to keep in mind are the LGBTQ+ youth who live in a community that is accepting of all LGBTQ+ people reported significantly lower rates of attempted suicide than those who do not. Additionally, LGBTQ+ youth who found their school to be LGBTQ+ affirming reported lower rates of attempted suicide. Speaking as a teacher, I know that I can speak for myself and many of my colleagues that we care for all of our students equally. We care very deeply for them and as a teacher that was affected by student suicide, I've cared deeply about the mental health of all of my students.

Julie Gearin a PCMS teacher said as a long-time employee of PPS schools, I'm here to speak in opposition to the proposal to create a new policy regarding political social advocacy in the classroom. As a social studies teacher, I'm well aware of the district's current policy regarding teaching about controversial issues. It's a public document that teachers in the community have access to. Additionally, teachers have reviewed the policy at our staff meetings.

The current district policy, which I wholeheartedly agree with, prohibits teachers from using their positions to advocate for issues or express their point of view in the classroom. Simply put, it's good teaching to adhere to the current district policy. However, the issue before us is to change the current working policy to designate a pride flag as controversial and or advocacy. Please note this proposed change doesn't stop with a pride flag. It could also include posters, flags relating to autism and a slew of other topics that some could find uncomfortable. Let me take a brief moment to explain to the committee why I, as a classroom middle school teacher, have a pride flag hanging in my classroom. A few years ago, feedback was shared at a staff meeting that the middle school GSA club students felt that it would be helpful if teachers displayed some symbol demonstrating that it was a safe space for them.

As a highly educated professional, I'm well aware of the developmental stage of my students, that it creates a heightened sense or need to feel connected and accepted by their peers. This is one of the reasons we teach in teams at the middle school. Additionally, I am all too aware of the statistics relating to suicide and self-harm among this marginalized community. Furthermore, I'm also well versed in how students learn and if they feel unsafe in the classroom. New information is difficult to process. My job is to educate the students before me. Therefore, I hung a pride flag to let students see that this is a safe space to learn. I also have signage welcoming students and emphasizing that in my classroom, everyone belongs. In the four years that I've had the pride flag hanging, there's never been any classroom discussion relating to it. Simply put, it's a visual reminder to the students in my classroom that this is a safe learning environment for all. For the students that a pride flag holds a different meaning and may feel uncomfortable, I would say this is a wonderful learning opportunity to reflect on empathy and tolerance. The classroom is a microcosm for the real world and we need to prepare all students to coexist and respect one another despite any personal beliefs they may hold. I would also like to add that students being uncomfortable is not something that teachers should avoid. For example, my students are uncomfortable when I sit them next to somebody they don't know, when I encourage them to think more critically about a topic, and when I require them to use proper speaking and listening skills when they present a current event in the classroom. Learning can coexist with a degree of discomfort. In fact, I would argue that the greatest growth usually does. I would like to conclude by respectfully asking that you vote down this proposal as the district currently has a policy that addresses advocacy in the classroom in its working. Furthermore, the district has qualified building principles to address any issue that may arise as a staff member violates the policy. Adopting this

proposed new policy would be a deliberate attempt to further disenfranchise, and marginalize students within the Pembroke school system. I want to ask that you don't allow this to happen

Erin Columbare a parent of Bryantville students said this afternoon I showed my children a picture of the pride flag, something that they're very familiar with. I asked them how they felt when they saw it. My second grader said she loved the pride flag, because it means everyone is accepted no matter who they love. My kindergartner said that the pride flag made her feel happy because it means love. There are so many statistics that show that when schools are affirming and accepting of all students, it benefits the entire student population, but I didn't come here tonight to read statistics. All students who attend Pembroke public schools deserve to feel safe and loved. They deserve to feel supported regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. It is our duty as parents to ensure this for them and to protect them. By removing the pride flag from classrooms, Pembroke is showing the rest of the world that we are not a safe place to raise their children. Removing this flag from the schools will be doing a disservice not only to our LGBTQ+ students but also to the students who identify as cisgender and heterosexual. The world is so much bigger than our small town and our students deserve to know that. There is a big beautiful diverse world outside of little Pembroke, Massachusetts and we are only harming our children if we try to pretend otherwise.

Removing the pride flag from classrooms is what I fear is only the first step that will be taken by a few individuals to remove the presence of other marginalized groups. That is not the place I want to raise my children in.

I wholeheartedly stand with the LGBTQ+ community and request that the Pembroke public schools remain an inclusive place for all children by continuing to allow the presence of the pride flag in our schools and I just want to say the fact that this is even up for debate in 2024 is disgusting and it tarnishes the good name of the town that I was so excited to move to three years ago.

Nicole McCann a North Pembroke teacher said I just want to say how proud I am of my students all of them no matter what side they spoke on. I think that should just attest to what we have done as teachers. Mr. Chilcot spoke to most of what I was going to say which is this slippery slope making a policy like this. My job innately is an advocate for all of your kids. If they can't read, I advocate to get them help but you take away my advocacy and I can do nothing. All we want is to educate your students, so let's move on Pembroke.

Rich Flynn a parent and elected official said I think that your proposal is reasonable and I wrote a statement I'd like you to hear. Every classroom contains a broad mix of students just as every home has a range of political beliefs.

Parents explain and model political and religious views of their children through words and deeds in a way that reflects their desire for them to grow up and become adults. This however is not the role of a school official.

A civil rights lawsuit against the town is almost certain to follow if administrators and teachers are given the authority to choose what constitutes and does not constitute political expression. It only makes sense to defer to the elected school committee when it comes to providing recommendations to prevent outside political activism, everybody's rights will be safeguarded by establishing and upholding a neutral policy.

Grant Nickerson a parent said he listened to the Policy Subcommittee and it seemed the main issue was the Pride flag. Having the Pride flag does not elevate the LGBTQ+ community, I think there's a difference between elevate and acknowledge. I'm concerned that national identity politics are leaking into this school committee, and I don't like that. The Pride flag is not a symbol attempting to indoctrinate your children. All it is is a symbol that says if your children happen to be gay, that's okay and by taking it down and shoving it in a room somewhere, you're saying that's not okay.

Patrick McDonough a parent said as a parent, we instill trust in our teachers, and from all that we've listened to tonight, it seems like the teachers and the children in the classroom are in consensus. So as parents we should listen to them and not take on an unnecessary policy. Let's instill some trust back into the teachers, please.

Steve Ciciotti a parent said my wife and I are parents to two children that attend our Pembroke public schools with our third to soon follow behind them. We love our Pembroke schools and are very strongly engaged with our local community in myriad of ways from town government to our beloved library and multiple other local volunteer organizations between us. We value STEM, history, arts and all, art, music, phys ed, secularism, independence and critical thinking skills. and expect our Pembroke schools to show continuous improvement on focusing on and refining toward educational excellence. However, I've come to learn about a very concerning streak of political activism on the part of some administrators and staff. This activity goes far beyond flags that you can find in a mere three-hour walk through the schools. Another example would be a teacher directed their students to write letters on how to save the Turner House. The Turner House, some might be familiar with, was a contentious issue in town. This is something that clearly goes beyond just pride flags. It has become so laissez-faire that where does the line end? Where do we draw the

line? Depending on who you talk to, this culture either enhances the educational process or poisons it. And while it's been more or less identified throughout the schools, its reputation especially precedes it at the higher grades. On this, enough families have stated that they don't speak up or push too hard out of fear of some quality of administrative or social retribution. This point is important just because while their value system might agree with the ends of belonging for everyone, they don't necessarily agree with the means implied, applied, and pushed through a language game that is seemingly always changing. Chairwoman Sue Bollinger's initiative to return better guardrails around our school administration and staff to place of political neutrality. A place where students can be taught, as Sue said, how to think and not what to think and empowering current and future students with broader First Amendment rights in order to have more robust and meaningful debates and conversations.

Paris Bollinger said Mrs. Bollinger became the lightning rod for those who don't want to speak up and because of that she has had a lot of character assassination. Sue is not a homophobe. Our oldest daughter is part of the LGBTQ community, as are other family members that we have very loving and caring relationships with. In addition to friends in the community that we socialize with as part of the LGBTQ+ plus. Those aspersions and the character assassinations are misplaced. I also agree that it's so important to make LGBTQ+ kids feel safe and promote a welcoming environment where all kids can feel safe, and where there is no favoritism. There's been a lot of discussion on the Pride flag and it's dominated this discussion and I don't think that was supposed to happen. The bigger issue for me, and I don't think this is with all teachers, I think it's the minority of teachers. I think that our Pembroke teachers do an awesome job. The administration does an awesome job, but we went through a pandemic and post-pandemic and we've seen what's happened. People have become so polarized to the point where we're afraid to talk, we're afraid to bring up where we stand on issues in the community or gatherings or the workplace, because we get automatically branded. When students come to a classroom and a teacher wears their political view one way or the other on their shirt sleeve, a child is sometimes afraid to be themselves when writing an essay because they feel it will affect their grades or they won't get the attention that they want. That's an issue and where that neutrality needs to take place, everyone needs to feel safe. I was in a classroom when we had a parent-teacher conference and saw all are welcome here, that made me happy that everybody is welcome there and it wasn't identifying one group.

Sandy Beaton a parent said she sent a letter to the committee last night. I have a child who is a member of the LGBTQ community who had the worst year of his life this year. The one thing that I failed to mention in my letter is that every member of my child's educational team at the middle school came together to support my child and get him through this and they did so a hundred percent according to the current policy. I don't know their viewpoints on my child's lifestyle as it should be, and the only thing they cared about was his development, his education and his well-being. I'm so grateful for their support and I'm very proud that they did exactly what you had asked of them.

Erin Dow a parent said all affinity groups are meant to create a safe space for marginalized groups to come together and feel safe to talk about concerns, experiences and issues they might be facing. If you decide to allow this policy to advance and approve it, you are not only silencing a portion of our community, but you are also targeting a protected class. As an administrator, with over 20 years of educational leadership experience, I know that targeting a protected class opens the town up to potential litigation, a price tag that we should be putting toward things like teacher salary. Sped tuition, educational enrichment, and student transportation, which I feel are much more important than a new policy. Protected classes exist under the law and we're made aware of today by the American Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts. We need to do better. You state that your proposed policy is driven by a desire to eliminate all identity politics in the classroom while preserving the space for students to express their unique cultures, identities, and ideas. There is nothing political about identity. When you pick and choose who you support, agree with, or allow, that is when it becomes identity politics, and this has absolutely no place in any of our classrooms. Give all of our students a safe space to be heard. They are not asking for curriculum reform; they're just asking to exist without bias.

Dave Norman a parent said I volunteer or serve on the anti-bullying, steering group for the district. In terms of anti-bullying, there's three perspectives from which to look at anti-bullying, an aggressor, a bystander and a victim. To me, this is a really strong symbol for all three of those populations. To the aggressor, it says maybe I shouldn't bully that kid, to the victim, it says maybe I have a safe space to report bullying or to just get support. and to the bystander, the same thing, maybe I have a safe place and a good place to report a bullying incident.

Tracy Marino, a parent said our family truly loves our schools and our teachers here in Pembroke and we have done all we can to show that we support those. I have had an experience with an uncomfortable political activity in one of my children's classrooms that I don't want to share any details of. We just dealt with it ourselves. Because of this, I do think that the current policy needs some updating. Updating clarification regarding some boundaries and some further

discussion. I know the school committee has already heard from me on this topic and you already discussed tonight some of my suggestions, but a couple of the additions I would love to see would be to include not only the steps a family may take to navigate what to do if they do encounter an issue, but also what a student's options would be to report an issue anonymously. Many of our families and especially our students are completely unaware that there is a means to do either of these things. Also, I would like to address the hateful comments that I have seen and heard being directed at the school committee chair. I have known Sue Bollinger in one capacity or another for many years. Before the school committee or the select board, we had connected as moms in and around town and continue to connect for a multitude of reasons, PTO, SEPAC, professional interactions, town events, etc. I've had many, many conversations about our children, parenting, schools, community and volunteerism over the years. Through these interactions, I have only known Sue to be a kind, gentle, caring member of our community who I know thinks that she is hoping to do what is best for everyone.

John Landolfi, a parent, I just wanted to say a pride flag will not turn a child gay. The community it represents can keep that same child safe when their parents may turn them away. These kids are turned away whether it's because of political reasons or religious reasons and they're just not accepted by their family so that safe space is important so that child does not become a statistic. It's being politicized and it's wrong and if your faith causes you to dislike a child because of their sexuality you should look in your heart and not to flags on the wall

Lindsay Newton a parent said I am a mental health professional and an unwavering advocate for the LGBTQ community. Every decision that we make as a school system is meant in the best interest of children and I urge the school committee not to commit any time or resources toward the creation or revision of this proposed policy. It is broad and inequitable and it politicizes an issue that to most are basic human rights and yet to a small amount of people are sadly somehow morally incorrect. The proposed goal of this policy revision according to Sue Bollinger is creating equality and neutrality. Equal means the same for all. Striving for equality undermines public education's focus on appropriately supporting all learners. Learning cannot be equal for all wonderfully diverse students. It needs to be equitable. Meaning each child gets what they need as an individual to be successful. In the same respect, neutrality does not create equality. It allows students in a majority group to continue being unaffected while leaving vulnerable students left unseen and underrepresented. This policy revision would negatively impact our most vulnerable and at-risk students. Those already in power who already see themselves represented in their school and in their society. What fears do these people hold over our children having a broader understanding of the world and its beautiful differences? Representation is not advocacy

Craig Spratt an attorney in Pembroke said I responded initially to a notice that I saw about the subcommittee meeting about the issue of social advocacy in the classroom. I had no idea that it had anything to do with the gay flag that's being waived. I responded because what was important is intellectual neutrality. I think that that's something that's extremely pedagogically significant. The superintendent quoted Chapter 76, Section 5, at the meeting, no person shall be excluded from or discriminated against in admission to a public school of any town or obtaining the advantages, privileges, or courses of study of such public schools on account of race, color, sex, gender, identity, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation. If the pride flag or some other flag of advocacy, such as the Black Lives Matter flag, is not visible in the classroom, that does not exclude anybody from admission. That does not discriminate against anybody from obtaining the advantages, privileges, or courses of study on the grounds of their sexual orientation or their gender identity. To me when the flag is present, the flag is in fact representing a point of view. There are many ways in which the flag is represented in which acceptance and fairness can be expressed without having a flag on the wall.

Dr. Janelle Kariotis-Rice said I am a psychology professor at Northeastern University. I am a psychologist in the LGBTQ+ community. I am a justice of the peace who primarily officiates LGBTQ weddings. But tonight, I think the most important role I have here, which has not been represented, is a gay parent to students in the school system. To me, what I hear is that by taking this out of classrooms and schools, you are teaching my children to be ashamed of their parents and to not feel comfortable sharing that they have same-sex parents. I want to remind everybody that this is not just about who the student is, but it is everything about their student life, their family, and their culture. and by taking that out you're not allowing for that representation. I just want to end with a quote that I think speaks to a lot of what we've talked about here with this neutrality aspect. Too often we idolize a middle stance as far more rational, more fair, and more loving. We wear it as its own kind of moral superiority. But virtue is not synonymous with neutrality. Sometimes integrity demands a choice. The choice here should be to not have this policy changed.

Molly Kyle, parent I grew up in the gay 90s but it wasn't always a gay old time for my closeted friends who stayed in the closet until well after school. They feared coming out would bring them shame, exclusion, bullying because they saw

these consequences to peers that were out. They suffered from anxiety, depression, substance abuse, and suicidal thoughts. Speaking as a millennial mom trying to raise kind and accepting kids, all I care about is that my kids are happy and healthy. Every day our children leave home in the morning. They have a pretty good chance of running into a pride flag or a thin blue line flag, and so. Why are we sheltering the kids from the real world and not fostering healthy debate in the classroom? Regarding those who feel uncomfortable with the pride flag, I would say this is a fantastic teachable moment to learn about differences. The best growth comes in times of discomfort.

Marielle McCann, a parent said children are only comfortable coming out because they see those flags. My children are comfortable at home and they're telling us their friends are coming out to them, but not at home. They are getting the resources to stay safe, off drugs, and not becoming suicidal because they're aware of it. One thing that I have heard a lot about tonight is religion, and I'd like to remind everyone that the freedom of religion includes the freedom from religion.

Tuffer Dow, a parent said I understand that LGBTQ plus issues make some people uncomfortable. I want to make an important distinction between intellectual and physical discomfort. Being intellectually uncomfortable with competing ideas is also called critical thinking. It is a skill that students need to succeed in school and life. It is our responsibility as adults to model critical thinking and intellectual discomfort and to encourage it in our children when they are confronted with complex ideas. This is a far cry from the kind of physical discomfort students feel when they are threatened, marginalized, and systemically disempowered by the very school system that is designed to make them feel safe and welcome. Simply legislating uncomfortable ideas out of our school system does no good and sets an alarming precedent that you can simply avoid issues you don't like and ignore people who live differently than you. The polar opposite of what a welcoming and friendly community like Pembroke should be. As members of a privileged class, we have a moral and legal obligation to support members of a protected class. It's not about elevating one group over another. It's not about what color your pen or your sticker or your flag is. It's about creating a safe and welcoming space for those who are statistically most likely to be marginalized, ostracized and bullying. Adding a policy like this is not leading by example it is an abdication of your responsibility to represent the best interests of the town and protect those who most need it. Trust your teachers and trust your administrators, they are the experts in the room.

Alyson Grey, a parent, said I have a master's degree in higher education administration and I've previously served in student services administration at Northwestern, the University of Chicago, and Harvard. Additionally, I'm experienced in staff development, leading workshops with education staff and leaders on many topics including unconscious bias. As someone with experience in student development, I grew very concerned when I heard the statements made by the school committee chair at last week's meeting. I sent Mrs. Bollinger and the school board an email to express my concerns. Ms. Bollinger replied and stated that she is advocating for students who may not feel heard or understood. She said that she had heard from students that felt hesitant to express themselves for fear of sounding homophobic. I'm not sure how this translates into creating a new policy. If this student or students have issues with the LGBTQ+ community and the clubs or symbols at school that show support for this group of students, perhaps a better course of action would be to connect them with a school counselor to discuss the views of the LGBTQ+ community and how to manage their feelings about this community.

This divisive issue is unavoidable in today's schools. Thankfully, some of our students feel comfortable expressing who they are. So why is this proposed policy suggesting social advocacy be designated to a certain room in the school? That's akin to putting LGBTQ+ students back in the closet. Is this congruent with your plan to meet the emotional needs of our community? There is concern that some social advocacy groups seem elevated and this is disturbing to the student she spoke with. This is a slippery slope, as we have all mentioned, that the school board should not get involved with. The proposed policy leaves the door wide open to put other groups supporting students in protective classes, such as Women in Engineering Club and the Latinas Latino Club. The school board revising our current policy is not the solution. We have tools in our toolbox, such as engaging school counselors. But as a parent, just to conclude, I have serious concerns about the school board committee chair serving in this capacity, seeing that she has raised serious concerns about the politicization of this committee.

Paige Graziano, a parent said one of my children identifies with this flag that we see here and two of them spoke earlier about their reluctance to speak in class because they don't agree with the entirety of what that flag currently symbolizes. I would like to say I really appreciate Sue for bringing this issue up. There was a time when five or ten gay, lesbian, etc. types of students in a school were absolutely bullied to the point where they could not speak and they reached out to other people and found advocacy and were able to get respect. That is the position of the school board, and I respect Sue for being willing to stand up for people who didn't feel willing to stand up for themselves. This display of discussion here is exactly what our government is designed to do. When the school committee can't come to an

agreement, it should come to the people for open discussion. We need a diversity of ideas, and our students need to be critically challenged to think about both sides of an issue. If my child wants to say in class where they are discussing gay and lesbian rights and cis and straight issues, etc., they should be able to say, I believe that a man is born a man, and a woman is born a woman, and that should be able to be discussed. I'm not saying anyone has to agree with it. I'm not saying that anyone deserves to be disrespected and that my kids should be able to say that you have less of a voice because you disagree with them. But everyone should have a voice. My daughter who identifies with the LGBTQ+ flag, she should never be bullied or discriminated against or kept from speaking her truth. This is a free country, and our schools should allow students to speak about divisive ideas and issues, but their teachers should remain neutral. When I teach, I ask questions no matter what position the student says to me. That's what I'm asking for in this school,

Erin Petti a parent said we are circling around this idea of neutrality. I wonder if there's an awareness that by making this move, it is wildly not neutral. It is a newsworthy new move. It says we have something that keeps kids safe and we're going to take it away. That's not neutral.

Monika Lovstad, a parent said a symbol that represents acceptance of everyone doesn't elevate them over anyone else. It says they accept everyone. Advocacy is arguing for or speaking out for and having a sticker on a door doesn't seem to meet those criteria to me. It just says this place is safe. When they see that symbol, they can feel like they don't have a better chance of not being seen as wrong or less than. Neutral's not equal. We're not all running the same race. Some people are starting a lot further back with people screaming and yelling and throwing things at them and throwing hurdles in their way. To say that you're going to make it neutral, that just leaves everybody in the dust without even a chance. I just want to say that again, who you are is not a choice. Your politics are a choice, your religion is a choice, who you are is not.

Chris Ciano said I'm not surprised that we're here tonight because a year and a half ago, our town banned a DEI committee and a lot of that happened under our noses. Some have said that if we take this policy, it'll be the first step in a slippery slope and I think that we're actually on that slope already. Some of the members of our Select board and school committee were swept into office on the coattails of that. They viewed that as a mandate to bring these kinds of culture wars to town and to our schools. I hope tonight shows them that that was a severe miscalculation. I think we're sending a pretty clear message here. I think this has opened many eyes in this town. I hope this shows us how important it is to vote in local elections. Mrs. Bollinger, I believe I heard you say that if the town did not support this policy, you would abandon it and I hope that you stay true to that word.

Rachel Kilnapp, a parent of two former students and educator said what I had prepared was about trusting your teachers to have balance in the classroom and trusting that the walls in the classroom represent the student body. I'm trying to represent many voices in my room and I imagine most of the English teachers are trying to do the same in their rooms. I need to ask a couple questions. Where is this coming from? Like where is this policy coming from? Where is the data on this? How many kids have come forward? Teachers should not be teaching their political views or supporting a candidate. They shouldn't. How many teachers have been disciplined with the policy that we already have? I'd also like to know if, have you asked these kids in an anonymous poll what they think. Is the pride flag upsetting them? Are their teachers upsetting them or discussions? Then let's have a conversation about the polling of the kids and what the kids think. When I look at this policy, I think it's unintentional. It screams that you don't trust teachers. I trust these teachers. I trust these kids. I think you need to go do some more research and figure out how to help these kids, how to help our community. How to solve this together and provide balance.

John Connaughton, a resident, said in support of data there are two great reports that are out there. One is GLSEN School Climate for LGBTQ+ students in Massachusetts and the other is the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ+ Youth Report and Recommendations, 215 pages of information out there on Massachusetts. When you look at the markers for risk behavior for all of those students, LGBTQ+ students are at two times or greater risk for those behaviors. It includes bullying, and skipping school. We've talked about suicide, attempting suicide, being bullied electronically, and being in physical fights. Two times or more for LGBTQ+ students over non-LGBTQ+ students. I would like to see is the school committee focus on the drive, and why we have a flag in the classroom. We shouldn't need one, it shouldn't be necessary. The greatest impact on reversing or impacting those numbers is when you have support at home and school. That has the greatest impact on reducing those numbers, so that's why the flag is there. I want to support you by saying, no, we don't need a flag in the classroom and I will support you when these numbers don't exist and these kids aren't in these situations. I think you've heard from the students, the teachers, the residents, and the parents of this community and you should step back from this policy.

Sam Eidlin, a teacher at PHS said I am the physics teacher at the high school. But I am not speaking as a teacher right now. I'm a resident of this town. I was born and raised here. I'm a product of this school. With all that entails. I was taught critical thinking by people that are now, I'm now proud to call colleagues. I don't see what you think you see. I have lived through it. I've seen it from the students' eye and I've seen it from the teachers' eye. More importantly, I sense dangerous rhetoric in what I have heard tonight coming the chair of this committee. I heard comments that could be interpreted as anti-Semitism. I've heard comments that can be interpreted as anti-what we stand for in the school. I heard you say there were different levels of Jewish faith. My grandmother didn't go to Auschwitz in Birkenau to be disrespected. My great-grandparents did not die in Dachau, the first concentration camp to hear that. Someone who espouses that rhetoric, even incidentally, shows a vast, deep moral irresponsibility with what they're trying to say on a very, very sensitive topic.

Max Cross, a parent said I just wanted to reiterate one of the points that Allison was saying that I thought was an interesting point to kind of rehash. If this policy were to be changed, this might put a target on the back of our school system and might make the news in a negative light. With everything that's going on with policy changes and budget plans, I think a negative thing to make a blip for Pembroke would be a bad thing. When I went to school, for public speaking, they said the number one thing is to read the room. I think the room has been hopefully heard loud and clear that the policy should not change.

Don Bryant, a resident said Two years ago, the town resoundingly spoke. against the presence of a mis construal of what DEI meant and its value system and its place in town governance and institutions. There were aggressive and continual accusations by those in authority, in town governance, against our citizens, public accusations that they were racist, that they were homophobes, that our town was unwelcoming. Town said to the DEI committee, this is finished and we reject this way of approaching our town. The school happens to be in the same zip code as the people who made that decision. Maybe some are unaware of that. There's a whole community out there to which we are called to account, where people are living out their lives, making their living, building their homes, educating their children. Could anyone meaningfully believe that the overwhelming express convictions and values of Pembroke residents two years ago have no implications for the culture and education of our children? Of course, they do. Is that time? Yes, it is. Our eyes are cast to the school with concerns that those same atmospheres are perhaps seeping into our schools that were already there. I speak in support of Sue Bollinger's resolution for it guides teachers and staff in a knowingly, maybe carelessly, for some, maybe even intentionally, from becoming carriers of a message that carries into the classroom that not all opinions are invited.

Samantha McKenna a PHS graduate said I'm currently a student at UMass Amherst, where there are currently a lot of controversial issues being presented. I have learned in my short time there that nothing will change if the people being affected, in this case the students, do not speak for themselves. Throughout my time in the PPS, I participated in days where we wore pride pins along with other colors to support different communities. It was small things like these days that helped me to feel comfortable and welcome in the school system, especially while growing up and exploring my own identity. I know for a fact that not allowing any sort of advocacy decorations, along with any other things, would make students feel unsafe and unwelcome, which is exactly what we do not want in any of our schools. Being around pride flags along with other advocacy flags or banners has no effect on learning whatsoever. Limiting students' expressions of themselves will truly affect them for the rest of their lives as these valuable years have major effects on them. I know that in my years in this school system, they would have been miserable if I had to follow the ridiculous and disgusting policy being presented right now.

Tara Kelley, a parent, said I'm going to say one thing. If you ban the Pride flag today, what are you going to attempt to ban tomorrow?

Ella Cullen a parent said I have a biracial child and I have a child who has a disability and I believe those children need to feel welcome as well as children who may not be on the gender spectrum. If we talk about representation, cisgender, white male, Judeo-Christian are the people who are represented everywhere in most of our books, most of our teachings, and most of our understanding throughout history. Not my child who can't hear or who has an intellectual disability. Not my child who is biracial and adopted and has gone through trauma. That's not what we see. We see people who look like us and we don't deserve that in this town. We deserve DEIB. We all deserve to feel like we belong and I do not agree with changing this. I don't want anybody to feel like they don't belong and I do not agree with this.

Charlie Gionet, a parent of a former student said the American Flag represents everybody, including the pride people. I've been insulted because I'm an old white guy here tonight. This is a safe space. This building is for education, not

advocacy. I'm a safe space, if you feel threatened, you come to me, and I will defend you. I don't care who you are. You're a human being. If you let this flag, what next flag?

Possible Vote of the Committee to Direct the Policy Subcommittee to review/revise or create a new policy regarding political/social advocacy in the classroom.

Mrs. Glennon asked Mr. Talbot for data. He said the number of student complaints about advocacy in the classroom is zero in the eight years he has been principal. There have been two parent complaints in the eight years. He said there may be students who are reluctant and need support to come forward. He said the Vision of a Graduate is loaded with prompts that address this issue. It measures how well the students embrace diversity and leverage their power to advocate for those in need. To think critically and analyze information in a sea of information that might not always be pleasing to them. We are responsible for providing examples for students to demonstrate an ability to build positive relationships while working effectively and respectfully with others on shared tasks. He surveyed students 18 months ago about whether students feel welcome at PHS and said 90% feel welcome and 92% feel safe all or most of the time. 86% said they trust teachers even if they don't have them and 92% said have at least one adult they can trust. This data is not backing up the creation of this policy. Mrs. Glennon said this is done and needs to end tonight.

Mr. Quinn said on Monday he spoke to school counsel about this policy and asked about potential lawsuits and was told there is a high probability. This would take a toll on the district and affect the work that needs to be done as a committee. He added that he doesn't think the policy was about the Pride flag but instead about bringing back neutrality. He said two students spoke tonight saying they don't feel heard and that needs to be addressed. He is willing to take the current policy and add information on how parents can report issues and the way concerns can be escalated.

Mr. Chilcott said the teacher's right to introduce controversial issues in the classroom does not include the right to advocacy and the current policy addresses this and covers everything said tonight. There is no need to move forward with a new policy. He added it is important that students know they can report things anonymously.

Mrs. Bollinger said she has a different viewpoint but she doesn't want to take any rights away from students. She wants the students to be able to advocate and have the Pride Flag in common areas of the schools rather than in the classrooms. She reiterated that she heard of at least three complaints about staff giving pins and stickers to students on various awareness days. She added if the decision is to continue with the current policy it should be revised to include an anonymous feature for students who are afraid to speak up.

Mrs. Obey said she inherently trusts the staff; they are amazing educators and the district has amazing students, parents and residents. We need to do a better job telling students how to report and need to do a better job explaining to families that they have options. She has heard from two parents in nine years concerning advocacy and each of those instances was dealt with using the current policy. She said if something is happening in your student's classroom or you hear something, let the administration know. It's hard to enforce a policy if you don't know something is going on.

VOTE: On a motion made by Patrick Chilcott and seconded by Michael Quinn, it was voted to direct the Policy Subcommittee to review or create a new policy regarding political advocacy in the classroom

Voting Yes: none

Voting No: Allison Glennon, Michael Quinn, Susan Bollinger and Patrick Chilcott

Abstaining: none

Absent: none

Future Meeting Dates and Topics

1/30, 2/13, 3/5, 3/19

VOTE: At 10:07 PM, on a motion made by Patrick Chilcott and seconded by Michael Quinn, it was unanimously voted to adjourn.

Voting Yes: Susan Bollinger, Allison Glennon, Michael Quinn and Patrick Chilcott

Voting No: none

Abstaining: none

Absent: David Boyle

APPROVED: March 5, 2024

MOTIONS

VOTE: On a motion made by Allison Glennon and seconded by Patrick Chilcott, it was unanimously voted to approve the meeting minutes of January 2, 2024 as amended.

Voting Yes: Susan Bollinger, Allison Glennon, Michael Quinn and Patrick Chilcott

Voting No: none

Abstaining: none

Absent: David Boyle

VOTE: On a motion made by Patrick Chilcott and seconded by Michael Quinn, it was voted to direct the Policy Subcommittee to review or create a new policy regarding political advocacy in the classroom.

Motion failed.

Voting Yes: none

Voting No: Allison Glennon, Michael Quinn, Susan Bollinger and Patrick Chilcott

Abstaining: none

Absent: none

VOTE: At 10:07 PM, on a motion made by Patrick Chilcott and seconded by Michael Quinn, it was unanimously voted to adjourn.

Voting Yes: Susan Bollinger, Allison Glennon, Michael Quinn and Patrick Chilcott

Voting No: none

Abstaining: none

Absent: David Boyle