

The Subcommittee on School Committee Policies met on Friday, February 12, 2021, in the Virtual Zoom Meeting. Present were Chair Kathy Bent, Barbara Dunn, Meg Mayo-Brown, Jim Hardy, and Jen Kruczek.

Ms. Bent called the meeting to order at 1:00PM.

Approval of Minutes

- Motion by Ms. Dunn, seconded by Dr. Mayo-Brown and the Committee unanimously approved the Minutes of November 20, 2020.

MASC Involvement in Subcommittee

- Ms. Bent asked Mr. Hardy to provide a quick overview of MASCs involvement in this Subcommittee.
- Mr. Hardy stated he looked at all existing policies and supplemental materials, including handbooks, MOUs, etc. that were sent to him. He looked at the existing manual v. the current manual for gaps where law regulation suggests there should be a policy governing that. He looked at changes in handbooks that might have affected policies. He looked at collective bargaining agreements to make sure nothing was in conflict with policies. He said this Subcommittee is now at the stage where it can go over the manual section by section and identify any issues. The Subcommittee decides what changes it wants to make, he takes the edits and incorporate the changes, and sends it back to the Subcommittee. He stated Sections A and B are ready to be reviewed. He is in the process of finalizing sections C and D. The process will continue until the Subcommittee get through section L. The School Committee will approve the policy sections in form and when all 12 sections are done, the motion would be to adopt the manual and rescind all former manuals.
- Ms. Bent stated there are a couple of policies that the Subcommittee would like to do now. She asked what was the advantage to approve by section rather than in entirety. Mr. Hardy stated knowing which policies are enforced right now. The Committee would stay under the current manual until it is all complete.
- Dr. Mayo-Brown stated the School Committee can revise a policy and make changes sooner rather than later.

Future Meeting Dates

- The Subcommittee agreed the second Friday of the month at 1:00pm through June worked for everyone.

Review Policy IHBHE – Remote Learning

- Ms. Bent said the way this policy is written, the School Committee has to vote to switch to remote learning. It creates confusion when the Committee votes after the fact. The Committee approves the use of the policy and the School Committee does not feel they need to approve this. She suggested changing “obtain approval” to “with notification” to the School Committee.
- Mr. Hardy stated the School Committee could set up the rules as to how this will happen. He gave his suggested language and the Subcommittee discussed and has new language to bring to the School Committee.

Review Policy BDG – School Attorney

- Ms. Bent stated the use of a school attorney could impact finances. With regards to finances, there are no financial implications with the in house attorney, but there could be financial implications if there is a settlement and letting the School Committee know about these settlements is not addressed in the policy. If the School Committee does not know where these issues arise, then they do not know if they need to look at policies. She stated that the policy also does not address goal setting and evaluation of the school attorney.
- Mr. Hardy stated the School Committee would not evaluate the school attorney. The Superintendent would evaluate them.
- Ms. Bent stated there is no language that prevents her from calling the school attorney. Superintendent should work directly with the attorney, but questions from the School Committee should go through the Chair. She thinks the Chair should be notified if there are financial implications or if there are settlements and then the Committee should be notified.
- Mr. Hardy stated he does not think the district reaches a settlement where the School Committee does not know about it. Those cases need a sign off by the Chair of the School Committee.
- Ms. Dunn stated School Committee members do go directly to the in house attorney for answers rather than going through the Superintendent or Chair.

- Dr. Mayo-Brown stated this would be a big shift in practice for the School Committee. Individual School Committee members have been calling the attorney with questions and she thinks that is a benefit of having an in house attorney. The past attorney would tell all School Committee members an answer to any question asked by an individual School Committee member.
- Dr. Mayo-Brown asked Ms. Bent if she only wanted the Chair to be able to contact the in house attorney. Ms. Bent stated the Chair needs to have a higher level of knowledge of what is going on.
- Dr. Mayo-Brown stated this is a good conversation for the whole School Committee to have to see if they think members should go through the Chair in order to ask the school attorney a question.
- Ms. Dunn stated the accessibility is a benefit of having the in house attorney.
- Ms. Bent asked if there should be a line that every clarification should be sent out to all School Committee members. Mr. Hardy stated the job description is the best place for the practices to go. Dr. Mayo-Brown stated the School Committee could set that expectation with the new attorney.
- Ms. Bent stated for the use of outside counsel, who should be the person authorized to call the attorney. If the Superintendent's use of the outside attorney would have a financial impact, then the School Committee should know. Dr. Mayo-Brown stated she accesses outside counsel on the School Committee's retainer. She used the outside attorney mainly for DLR and special education. If there is a litigation matter, then the School Committee knows. Ms. Bent stated that is not in the policy. Dr. Mayo-Brown stated that School Committee has that set up by having the retainer. If something were going to exceed retainer, then there would be additional approval by the School Committee.
- Mr. Hardy stated in settlements, there is the matter of confidentiality of the student and that includes from the School Committee.
- Mr. Hardy stated the issues Ms. Bent is talking about are expectations of the job position and these should be put in job description and not in the policy.
- Ms. Bent stated it sounds like no changes are needed.

Procedure for Identifying Policies for Review

- Ms. Bent stated the documents for Sections A and B were sent to the Subcommittee.
- Mr. Hardy stated the changes to sections A and B could be discussed at the next meeting.
- Ms. Dunn reminded the group that the School Committee is supposed to be looking at these policies with a lens of equity and anti-racism.

Motion by Ms. Dunn, seconded by Dr. Mayo-Brown, and the Committee voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

Meeting Adjourned at 1:58PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jen Kruczek
Executive Assistant