

School Committee Roles and Responsibilities, Member Ethics, & Open Meeting Law

**Sudbury School Committee
July 22, 2024**

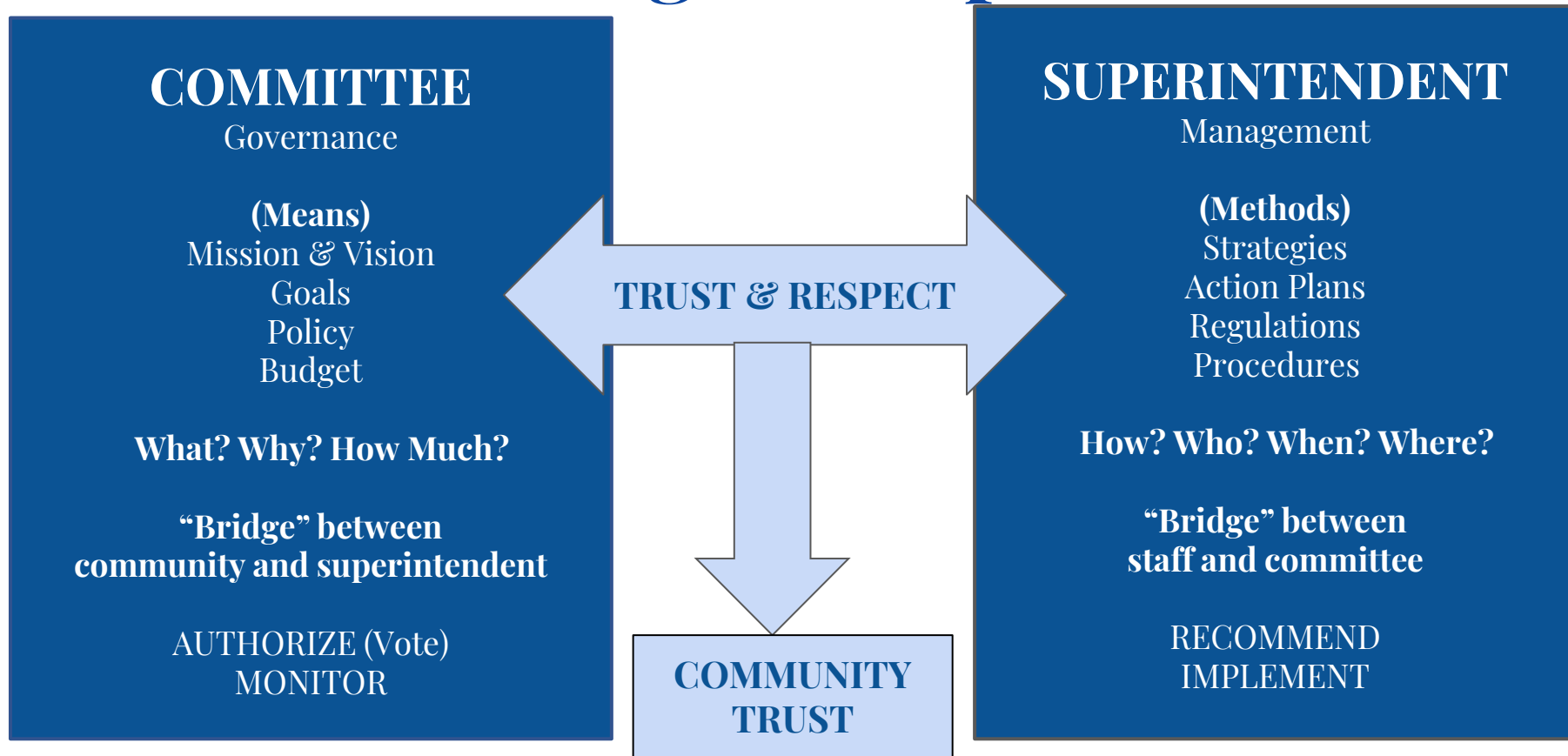
What We Will Cover:

- ❑ **MASC's Member Ethics**

- ❑ **Open Meeting Law**
 - ❑ **Basics**
 - ❑ **Executive Session**
 - ❑ **Electronic Communication and Social Media**

- ❑ **Roles and Responsibilities**

Understanding & Respect for Roles



Understanding & Respect for Roles

COMMITTEE

- Power exercised through official action at properly posted meeting
- Govern through policy
- Financial resources
- Engage the community
- Sustain SC/Superintendent Relationship
- Employer of Record

INDIVIDUAL MEMBER

- No individual authority
- No greater power than any other qualified voter
- Contribute to and communicate vision and goals
- Ask critical questions
- Support committee decisions
- Be dedicated to the work on behalf of students

School Committee Member Ethics

**Massachusetts Association of School Committees
Code of Ethics**

School Committee Members In Their Relations With Their Community Should:

- Realize that their primary responsibility is to the students.**
- Recognize that their basic function is to be policy making and not administrative.**
- Remember that they are one of a team and must abide by, and carry out, all Committee decisions once they are made.**
- Be well informed concerning the duties of a Committee member on both a local and state level.**
- Remember that they represent the entire community at all times.**
- Accept the office as a Committee Member as a means of unselfish service with no intent to "play politics," in any sense of the word, or to benefit personally from their Committee activities.**

This Means:

- Your first responsibility is to the students.**
- You have no position or authority that is beyond that of MEMBER of the Committee. It does not exist apart from that.**
- You know that you have other roles, but to the district staff, your Committee membership is always what they will see first. Always be mindful of that.**
- Any administrative responsibility or decision must be redirected to the administration.**
- All discussion and decision making is to happen at the table.**

School Committee Members In Their Relations With School Administration Should:

- ❑ Endeavor to establish sound, clearly defined policies which will direct and support the administration.**
- ❑ Recognize and support the administrative chain of command and refuse to act on complaints as an individual outside the administration.**
- ❑ Give the chief administrator full responsibility for discharging his/her professional duties and hold their responsible for acceptable results.**
- ❑ Refer all complaints to the administrative staff for solution and only discuss them at Committee meetings if such solutions fail.**

This Means:

- ❑ **Communicate that official actions as a member of the committee are the only way members can exercise their powers.**
- ❑ **Act via agreed upon protocols in communicating with the superintendent, other administrators, and other staff.**
- ❑ **Work with other members through deliberation if reports or information are needed for the community.**
- ❑ **Stay within the policy/budget/goals/evaluation position.**
- ❑ **Refer members of the public to the appropriate district contact.**

School Committee Members In Their Relations With Their Fellow Committee Members Should:

- ❑ Recognize that action at official meetings is binding and that they alone cannot bind the Committee outside of such meetings**
- ❑ Realize that they should not make statements or promises of how they will vote on matters that will come before the Committee.**
- ❑ Uphold the intent of executive sessions and respect the privileged communications that exists in executive sessions.**
- ❑ Not withhold pertinent information on school matters or personnel problems, either from members of their own Committee or from members of other Committees who may be seeking help or information on school problems**
- ❑ Make decisions only after all facts on a question have been presented and discussed.**

This Means:

- ❑ **Act as a member of the Committee even when in the minority position.**
- ❑ **Do your part to ensure the business of the district can be conducted in meetings (stay on task, defer to the Chair in running the meeting, redirect as needed)**
- ❑ **Recognize that decisions are made in Committee meetings as a result of deliberation.**
- ❑ **Share information and knowledge with other members to strengthen the Committee, and thus the district, as a whole.**
- ❑ **Make decisions only after all information is shared and matters are deliberated.**

Open Meeting Law Or “OML”

- ❑ Provides balance between government accountability and government efficiency.
- ❑ Ensures transparency by public bodies requiring:
 - ❑ Advanced notice
 - ❑ Open deliberations
 - ❑ Public access
- ❑ Allows government to effectively manage its operations by
 - ❑ Providing for certain deliberations to take place in executive session
 - ❑ Maintaining confidentiality of certain records of executive session

Open Meeting Law Basics

- ❑ Notice must be posted, with the agenda, for all meetings
- ❑ Meetings must be open to the public unless the public body enters into executive session
- ❑ Minutes must be kept for open and executive session

Is it a meeting?

Three part test to determine: Is it...

- ❑ **Deliberation?**
 - ❑ **Discussion intended to move towards a decision**

- ❑ **By a quorum?**
 - ❑ **A simple majority of the public body**

- ❑ **About something under that body's purview?**

Executive Session

- ❑ **Committee must convene an open session first**
- ❑ **Committee must vote to enter executive session**
- ❑ **By roll call vote**
- ❑ **A majority of the full body (regardless of attendance at the meeting) must agree**
- ❑ **All votes are by roll call and are entered into minutes**
- ❑ **Chair must state which of ten reasons for executive session is the purpose, including everything that may be revealed without compromising executive session purpose**
- ❑ **Chair must announce whether open session will reconvene following conclusion of executive session**

OML & Electronic Messaging

- ❑ **With a few exceptions, any use of electronic messaging by public body members to communicate with a quorum of public body members, during or outside of a meeting, may constitute private deliberation, which is prohibited by the Open Meeting Law.**
- ❑ **Electronic messaging during a meeting by less than a quorum of the public body's members, while not directly prohibited by the Open Meeting Law, is discouraged if those electronic communications are not shared at the meeting with the members of the public who are present.**
- ❑ **Those participating in a meeting—including members of the public!—must do so through the chair.**

OML & Social Media

- ❑ **Members may communicate with members of the public through any social media platform.**

- ❑ **However: *Proceed with Caution!***
 - ❑ **Avoid creating accidental quorums and chain deliberation**
 - ❑ **Do not declare your voting intentions as deliberation is to be done as a body at the table**
 - ❑ **Be informative, not argumentative**
 - ❑ **Use only official channels to communicate, not personal**

Communication Pathways

- ❑ **Emails to the Committee or to Individual Members**
 - ❑ **Chain of Command (Communication)**
 - ❑ **Committee Policy (Spokesperson)**

- ❑ **Social media posts**
 - ❑ **District vs. Non-district**
 - ❑ **Personal Postings**

- ❑ **Board member role in public**
 - ❑ **Committee Policy**
 - ❑ **Operating Protocols**

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