Chappaqua Central School District
Board of Education
Governance Handbook

The purpose of the Chappaqua Central School District Governance Handbook is to serve as a clear and helpful resource for members of the Board of Education, CCSD staff, and the CCSD community. The superintendent and Board have distinct and separate roles, responsibilities, and legal authority in carrying out the District's work. They must also operate independently as members of the CCSD governance team as they work together to support students, staff, families and the broader community.

I. ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES & RIGHTS

The Board's Responsibility

As stewards of the Chappaqua Central School District, the Board aims to maintain a high degree of trust among the Board of Education, the Superintendent of Schools and administrative staff, the teaching staff, and the community.

Each Board member is a public officer under the law and takes an oath of office to uphold the law and faithfully discharge their duties. While the role of the Board of Education is to represent the school community and build public trust and support for the district's schools, it is not to manage the district's day-to-day operations. Board members focus on policy, fiscal oversight, and strategic goals, relying on the superintendent and other administrators for day-to-day operations, communications, and problem-solving.

The Role of Board Members

- The Board is primarily a policy-setting body and delegates the administration of the schools to the Superintendent of Schools and staff. The Board also has fiduciary responsibilities in the governance of the District.
- The Board ensures strategic goals and priorities are in place for the District, reviews those goals annually, and makes updates and changes as necessary, taking into account recommendations from the Superintendent.
- The Board is responsible for adopting a fiscally responsible budget based on the District's strategic plan and goals.
- The Board is responsible for hiring, evaluating, supervising and supporting the Superintendent of Schools.

- Board members have authority for the conduct of the District schools only when acting as a body at a properly convened meeting or when delegated authority by Board policy or resolution. Board members acting as individuals have no authority to speak for or take action on behalf of the Board.
- Board members attend all BOE meetings to the best of their ability and serve on at least one committee. Board decisions are binding on all Board members.
- The Board will annually evaluate itself, and review its protocols.

The Role of The Superintendent of Schools

- The Superintendent is the Chief Executive Officer of the District and is responsible for its administration.
- The Superintendent shall propose regulations, rules, policies, and procedures necessary for the efficient operation of the District.
- It is the Superintendent's primary responsibility to provide visionary leadership that enables the District to continually improve the educational experience of children.
- The Superintendent is a visible presence in the schools and the larger community.
- The Superintendent provides the Board with the information and analysis needed to formulate policy and take appropriate actions.
- The Superintendent also creates and sustains a climate of collegiality among staff members and parents.

The Role of The Board President

- Has no greater authority than any other board member, except for responsibilities enumerated herein or by law (e.g., signing official documents).
- Serves as a liaison between the Board and the superintendent.
- Is responsible for sharing information pertaining to Board work with all Board members on a timely basis.
- Works with the Superintendent to set meeting agendas.
- Runs meetings in an orderly fashion, using parliamentary procedure. Encourages open discussion and deliberation, and guides the Board to reach decisions in a timely manner.
- Is the spokesperson for the Board with the media.
- Makes committee and liaison assignments in consultation with Board members.
- Responds to communications from the community received by the Board; in the case of emails, copies the Board on both the original correspondence and the response.
- Takes an active role in the orientation of new Board members.

The Role of The Board Vice-President

- Stands in for the president whenever they are not available.

Rights of Board Members

- Each Board member is entitled to disagree on any issue, but once an issue is voted on and decided, the Board will move on. It is expected that all Board members will support the position of the Board, even if they were in the minority.
- Board members maintain their rights as parents. Members should make it clear to staff when they are assuming their role as parents and not visually present themselves as Board members.

II. COMMUNICATION

INTERNAL COMMUNICATION STRUCTURE

- Individual Board communication with the superintendent regarding important questions, District governance, and specific Board matters shall be shared with the rest of the Board of Education.
- To ensure equitable and appropriate inter-Board communication, the superintendent will occasionally reach out to individual Board members as needed. Any substantive issue or concern raised will be directed to the Board President. The question or concern, along with any superintendent response, will be disseminated to all Board members.
- The Superintendent will be the District's primary provider of news and information to the school community.
- Board member requests to the superintendent for readily available information should copy all Board members. The Superintendent should provide the information to all Board members within a reasonable amount of time. If the Superintendent does not believe the request is for readily available information, the Superintendent will seek the consensus of the Board for the request at a public Board meeting.

Board to CCSD Staff: Board members are encouraged to get to know staff members but are never to give them directives. In general, contact with staff members occurs through the superintendent or assistant superintendents directly when Board members are acting in their capacity as Board representatives.

Board to School District Attorneys: The Board President represents the Board on matters involving the District's attorney and is authorized to communicate with them at any time. No Trustee should communicate with the District's attorney without first seeking access through the Board President.

The full Board should be informed of all communications with the District's attorney. All legal opinions provided by the School Attorney shall be shared with the entire Board and Superintendent of Schools in writing, unless the matter pertains to the Superintendent's

employment with the District or involves a claim or litigation brought by an individual Board member, in which case the response will not be shared with that specific Board member.

EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Formal External Communication: Formal external communication is the responsibility of the District. When communication is to come from the Board of Education, members of the Board will be asked for input. Board input may also be solicited on other communications.

Press Contact: All official statements of Board positions and responses to press inquiries come from the District or Board president. The vice-president may speak to the press if the Board president is unavailable. Other Board members should direct the press accordingly.

Email or Written Correspondence from Community or Staff Members: All written correspondence will be acknowledged by the Board president, district clerk, or superintendent. The Board president will collaborate with the district clerk and/or superintendent to coordinate responses to emails and may ask other Board members to respond on behalf of the Board. When an individual Board member receives an email communication from a community member it will be shared with the full Board. In some cases, a standardized response from the district clerk on behalf of the Board may be developed to handle a high volume of emails on a particular issue promptly.

Parent Issues: Board members will direct parents who call to communicate up the hierarchy of authority: starting with the teacher, coach, guidance counselor, assistant principal, principal, assistant superintendent, and superintendent before involving Board members. They will not offer to research the problem and call the parent back. Depending on the seriousness of the issue or complaint, Board members will also promptly inform the full Board and superintendent of the matter.

Board Member Responsibilities: Board members should relay substantive criticisms, complaints, or suggestions to the full Board and the superintendent. The Superintendent and staff are expected to address the issue. Board members do not attempt to solve the problem or act as intermediaries between the school and the individual raising the question.

Complaints or concerns brought forth to the administration by the Board must be brought forward with identifiable information should the Board wish for the administration to act or address complaints, criticisms, or concerns.

Social Media: Board members who participate in social media should identify themselves as communicating in their private citizen capacity and avoid online conversations that could be interpreted as speaking for the Board or constituting an online Board meeting.

Board members will not make comments on school related matters on social media sites on behalf of the Board or participate in online forms on behalf of the school district.

Board of Education Elections: Board members can not endorse candidates during the board election period (April-May) as members of the Board. Board members may endorse candidates as private citizens.

Nothing in the above is intended to prohibit or discourage Board members from discussing matters of public interest with community members, where the Board member provides publicly available information.

III. BOARD MEETINGS

Board Meeting Dynamics: Public meetings should aim to start promptly at their advertised time and conclude within two hours. Board members will respectfully listen to their colleagues and staff without interruption, ensuring that each viewpoint is heard. The Board and administration will model mutual respect and civility for each other and for members of the public.

Time & Place of Meetings: Public board business meetings generally take place in person twice per month at 7pm in HGHS. Executive sessions may occur before, after, or during the public meeting. Special meetings may be called at other times. Business meetings are typically live-streamed, and a recording of the meeting will be posted on the website afterward.

Public Notice of Meetings: Public notice of meetings, including regular board meetings, work sessions, committee meetings, special meetings, and executive sessions, shall be posted on the district website.

Meeting Agenda: The responsibility for setting the agenda is shared by the Superintendent and the Board President. Meeting agenda will be posted online for community members in advance of the meeting.

The Board agenda and supporting materials will generally be distributed to Board members the Friday prior to the regularly scheduled Board meeting, as practicable. Presentations for Board meetings (even in draft form) will be made available to the Board on the Friday prior to the meeting.

Board members should, to the extent possible, inform the Superintendent and Board President 24 hours in advance of any issues, errors, or omissions they intend to raise at the Board meeting,

and the Superintendent will do the same. Board requests for clarification on agenda items should be addressed, to the extent possible, with sufficient time before meetings to ensure Board members understand their responsibilities and can fulfill their fiduciary duties.

Public Participation At Board Meetings: The Board of Education believes that it is the responsibility of the Chappaqua Central School District to provide opportunities for the public to observe Board deliberations and discussions at Board meetings and for the Board to listen to comments, concerns and questions from the public.

To encourage participation, support effective decision making and the principles of freedom of speech, the Board recognizes a need to conduct all public business openly and with civility. To provide an environment that is welcoming to diverse views, the audience is asked to refrain from clapping, cheering, booing or making any other commentary to public comments.

School Districts need appropriate opportunities to provide for dialogue among interested parties. When individuals express views or present their position in a respectful manner, such positive behavior enhances the purposes of open public discourse and serves to make the importance of public service and volunteerism more valued and attractive.

Public Comment: In order to allow for public comment in an orderly and efficient manner at Board meetings, the following protocols shall be observed:

- When recognized by the Board President, the individual must provide his/her name for the record and the organization he/she represents, if applicable.
- Speakers are limited to three (3) minutes per speaker, timed by the District Clerk.
- The Board of Education may move to extend an individual's time by one (1) minute for the purpose of concluding the comments.
- Speakers may comment on agenda items or comment about school-related subjects.
- Speakers may not comment upon or discuss matters which are appropriate for executive session (e.g., student matters, personnel matters). Individuals who wish to discuss individual District personnel or students should present their comments and/or concerns to the Superintendent during regular business hours.
- Speakers may not use the public comment period as a means to self-promote, market or advertise their business or other commercial ventures, political or other personal activities, either directly or indirectly. Public comment is restricted to agenda and non-agenda items regarding the affairs of the school district.
- Speakers will direct comments/questions to the Board President and will not address individual Board members directly.

- The Board will not engage in a dialogue with the individual, however, questions that may be responded to easily may be answered; other questions will be referred to the Superintendent.
- Speakers shall conduct themselves in a respectful manner and with civility. To maintain a civil discourse and to further the overall purpose of the meeting, speakers shall refrain from using obscene language, making threats of violence, or making statements advocating racial, religious or other forms of prejudice or advocating illegal action.
- After the public comment period has been completed, the Board members may have a discussion among themselves regarding comments presented.

The Board President shall be responsible for the orderly conduct of the meeting and the enforcement of the provisions of this policy and, therefore, may cut-off a speaker who does not conduct themself in a respectful manner and with civility as set forth above.

Consent Agenda: Use of the Consent Agenda permits the Board of Education to make more effective use of its time by adopting a single motion to cover those relatively routine matters, which are included. Any member of the Board who wishes to discuss individually a particular piece of business on the Consent Agenda may so indicate and that item will be considered and voted on separately, thus preserving the right of all Board members to be heard on any issue. It is recommended that the Board of Education approve the following Consent agenda as submitted by the Superintendent of Schools.

Walk-On Issues: The Board may opt to add a walk-on resolution to the agenda in those situations where agenda notice is not practicable.

Executive Session: Information discussed in executive session is confidential. The Board may not take action in executive session except to vote on disciplinary charges against a tenured teacher, administrator or teaching assistant. Once the executive session concludes, the BOE must reconvene the public meeting before formally closing the business of the BOE.

A board may call an executive session on the following subjects:

- Matters that would imperil public safety if disclosed.
- Any matter that may disclose the identity of a law enforcement officer or informant.
- Information related to the current or future investigation or prosecution of a criminal offense that would imperil effective law enforcement if disclosed.
- Discussions involving proposed, pending, or current litigation.
- Collective bargaining pursuant to Article 14 of the Civil Service Law.
- The medical, financial, credit, or employment history of a particular person or corporation, or matters leading to the appointment, employment, promotion, demotion, discipline, suspension, dismissal, or removal of a particular person or corporation.

- The preparation, grading, or administration of exams.
- The proposed acquisition, sale, or lease of real property or the proposed acquisition, sale, or exchange of securities, but only when their value would be substantially affected by publicity.
- Any matter made confidential by federal or state law.

The Superintendent shall be notified and have the right to attend all meetings of the Board, including executive secession, unless the Board is discussing their performance, salary or information about their successor.

Board Member Committees: Advisory committees may be established from time to time by the Board of Education for the purpose of studying significant issues within the school community. To that end, the Board shall, at its discretion and in accordance with state law and regulation, appoint advisory committees to gather information about and/or examine the advantages and disadvantages of particular options under consideration by the Board. Advisory committees may be asked to make recommendations which the Board may accept, reject, or return to the committee for further study. Any action stemming from committee reports is the responsibility of the Board.

The membership of each advisory committee organized by the Board shall be appointed by official Board resolution. Resolutions appointing such committees shall state, specifically, the scope of the work and the charge of the committee. Advisory committees shall be discontinued upon completion of their assignment(s).

Appointments to advisory committees shall be on the basis of interest, experience, and expertise. The Board shall make every effort, when it is appropriate, to form committees that are representative of the entire school community. publicity, or the release of information concerning committee findings, shall be the responsibility and prerogative of the Board.

Such committees must not interfere with the Superintendent's authority as established by law or delegation through Board policies and resolutions.

IV. KEY STATUTES & DISTRICT POLICIES

THE BOE AS A CORPORATE BODY; TRUSTEES AS PUBLIC OFFICERS; NECESSITY OF QUORUM (Education Law § 1701; Public Officers Law § 10; General Construction Law § 41): As a public officer, a school board member takes an oath of office to uphold the law and to faithfully discharge his/her duties. As stated above, a school board is a corporate public body and as such can act only by a majority of the BOE. Individual BOE members have no inherent powers to act by reason of holding office. For the BOE to take any

action a majority of the whole number of the board members shall constitute a quorum (three trustees) that is necessary in order for the board to exercise its power, authority or duty.

OPEN MEETINGS LAW (Public Officers Law § 100-111): The Open Meetings Law, often known as the "Sunshine Law," gives the public the right to attend meetings of public bodies, listen to the debates and watch the decision making process in action. It requires public bodies to provide notice of the times and places of meetings, and keep minutes of all action taken. Because the school boards are public bodies, the Open Meetings Law requires school board meetings where school district business will be discussed to be open to the public. Public business includes not only binding votes of the board, but also any activity that is preliminary to such a vote or involves consideration of a matter that could be the subject of board action.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION LAW (FOIL) (Public Officers Law § 84-90): School districts' records are subject to the Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) and the law defines "record" as "any information kept, held, filed, produced or reproduced by, with or for an agency...in any physical form whatsoever..." except records or portions of records that fall within one of several categories of deniable records. The Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) governs rights of access to government records, while the Open Meetings Law concerns the conduct of meetings of public bodies and the right to attend those meetings.

EXECUTIVE SESSIONS OF THE BOE (General Municipal Law § 805-a, Educ. Law § 1708 and Public Officers Law § 102-105): Generally, the BOE deals with numerous issues, some of which may not be disclosed publicly. This duty to maintain confidentiality provides, "no municipal officer may disclose confidential information acquired by him in the course of his official duties or use such information to further his personal interests" (General Municipal Law § 805-a). An executive session is a portion of the school board meeting that is not open to the public. It can take place only upon a majority vote of the BOE taken at an open meeting. Executive sessions are permitted for only a limited number of specific purposes and with certain limited exceptions; no official action can be taken on issues discussed in executive session without first returning to open session. (Educ. Law § 1708 and Public Officers Law § 102-105). Permissible executive session topics are described elsewhere in this handbook on page 11 and in the District policy manual.

REMOVAL OF A BOARD MEMBER

A Board member may be removed from office by the school board for "official misconduct" – that is, misconduct relating to a board member's official duties (Educ. Law § 1709(18)).

That would be the case when a Board member:

a. engages in an unauthorized exercise of power, or
b. intentionally fails to exercise power to the detriment of the District

The commissioner of education may remove a school board member from office for the willful violation or neglect of duty, or the willful disobedience of a law or a decision, order, or regulation of the commissioner or rule of the Board of Regents (Edu. Law. § 306, 310)

The removal of a Board member may take place only after a hearing on the charges either before the Board of Education or the commissioner of education. A written copy of the charges must be served at least 10 days before the hearing. The Board member must be afforded a full and fair opportunity to refute such charges before removal.

APPLICABLE CHAPPAQUA CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT POLICIES

2000 - Board of Education / Principles & Organization / Board & Superintendent Procedures & Protocols
2001 - Board of Education Communications Policy
2005 - Advisory Committees
2010 - Rescheduled Board Meetings Due To Emergency Closings
2055 - Appointment of Interim Member / Board of Education
2060 - Policy On Open Discussion of Public Issues
2065 - Policies, Bylaws, and Regulations

Adopted – October 9, 2024
Revised - December 11, 2024