

**Policy Review Committee
Meeting Minutes
September 29, 2020
SAO Superintendent's Conference Room
1:00 PM**

Present:

Members

- ✓ Mrs. Phyllis Byrum, *Chair School Board Member*
- ✓ Dr. Judith Brooks-Buck, *Vice-Chair School Board Member*

Participants

- ✓ Wendell M. Waller, *School Board Attorney*
- ✓ Renée Davenport, *Administrative Assistant*

➤ **Meeting called to order.**

➤ **Approval of Minutes from September 1, 2020 meeting.**

- No corrections noted for minutes. Minutes will be approved by unanimous consent.

➤ **Unfinished Items.**

- None presented.

➤ **New Business – Review of Proposed Policy Changes.**

- Review of the policies that may be presented at the school board meeting on October 8, 2020.

▪ **Section 2-2.7 – Statement of Policy; contractual authority of school superintendent; contracts not requiring sealed bids or competitive negotiation.**

- Attorney Waller shared with the committee that there are three changes to committees of the School Board.

The first of which is the Pupil Personnel Committee (PPC) and the recommendation is to remove the PPC as a committee of the school board and in place of that have what is called the Student Services Review Committee. This would be an administrative committee appointed by the School Superintendent to view decisions made by the Discipline Officer of Suffolk Public Schools. The makeup of the Student Services Review Committee would be administrators from the different buildings as well as administrators from the Central Office. Then a person would have the right to appeal certain decisions, mainly expulsion decisions

to the full school Board. That is what is being proposed in place of the Pupil Personnel Committee.

Mrs. Byrum questioned if the proposed Student Services Review Committee would hear questions on zone waivers and things such as that. Attorney Waller responded that this is correct, they would hear out of zone requests. We also looked at some neighboring school divisions to see if they had some type of administrative committee to hear these appeals. In our preliminary reviews of other school divisions, we have learned that some of them do in fact have administrative appeal processes. Expulsions would still go to the board. If the Student Services Review Committee recommends expulsion, that would still go to the full school board. The same procedures that are currently in place that govern the PPC would govern this committee as well. In terms of how the hearing is conducted and in terms of notice, all of these would apply. The only major difference in what is done now compared to what is being recommended are two things; one is the makeup of the committee, it being an administrative committee versus a school board committee; and two members serving on the committee. Building administrators or people from the Central Office would make up this committee. There will be a pool of people that could serve on this committee and depending on whether it is a high school student, middle or elementary; committee members will probably be pulled from those building levels. They would have more of an understanding of what is happening out in the field when they are getting these cases on appeal. And it would also lend itself to some consistency in application of policies because they know what has happened in similar situations in other buildings.

Mrs. Byrum questioned if the administrators that are pulled would be people that would not be involved in the case? Attorney Waller answered that they cannot have any involvement in the initial decision made by the Discipline Officer nor any initial decision coming from the building. For example, if it's a student from Nansemond River, then no one from Nansemond River could be involved in this situation. Dr. Brooks-Buck noted that one of the things that we need to make clear and since these meetings are public is why we are making this change because this is a question that may come up. She suggested that people need to be made aware and understand that because these meetings are made public and because we are elected officials, there is confusion now with parents' privacy rights and students' privacy rights with regard to the details of their cases in these situations and that's why we are making these changes. Attorney Waller expressed that there is always a concern about trying to balance the public's right to access meetings of this nature versus students' rights. He further explained that both Ms. Byrum and Dr. Brooks-Buck having served on the PPC in the past understands that when they gather for these hearings especially if you are dealing with a lot of students at one time, and oftentimes these meetings are held down stairs at Central Office, they are gathered in the lobby area and so forth. If these meetings are open to the public, anyone from the public could come in and see what students are being disciplined or recommended for discipline. They may not know exactly what the recommendations are but they will be able to see that these students have some concerns at the building level. By taking this committee away from being a school

board committee, it really protects the privacy rights of any student that may be going through this process. There may be those who think that when the School Board actually hears the case at the school board meeting, you would run into the same situation. However, you will not have the same number of students and the time for those hearings often occur early before the 7 o'clock main meeting and very few people are there for the 5:00 or 6:00 hour; therefore, the likelihood that a students' privacy interest may be somehow compromised is probably pretty small at that point. When you have a mass group of students all assembling in one place, you run a greater risk that some of their rights could be open to public scrutiny. This change in some way will protect those students' rights. Discussion was made to have this presented as an action item and to be added for 1st reading and adoption at the meeting.

- The other committee change relates to the City Council Liaison Committee. In light of the fact that joint meetings are being arranged between the School Board and City Council there is no longer a need for the City Liaison Committee. The whole purpose behind the committee was to improve relationships between the two elected bodies and to discuss matters of common interests. It was further mentioned that it really didn't make sense to have a Liaison Committee if there wasn't any committee work to be done. Both Chair Byrum and Vice Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck agreed and this will be added for 1st reading and adoption.
- Attorney Waller continued that the next proposed change would be the Finance Committee. He received information from the Executive Director of Finance, Ms. Wendy Forsman suggested this policy change to better reflect the current function of the Finance Committee. So the language that you see now in the proposed policy change is what the function of the committee is currently. So we want to make sure that what the description of the committee is in line with what the committee is specifically charged to do. This description pertains to major accounting changes in policy and/or significant fluctuations in revenue, expenses that could affect operations, information about the annual resolution concerning authorizing the Superintendent to spend down remaining funds, any operating funds and independent audits and comments. This policy change could also be first reading and adoption unless there are some concerns from other school board members.

All of these policy changes will be put on the agenda for first reading and adoption.

- The last thing to discuss is the calling of Special Meetings of the School Board and if you want to make any changes to that. As it currently stands, special meetings can be called by the Chair or two members of the School Board. This policy is pretty consistent throughout the region. A minority of school divisions require more than two members and some allow special meetings to only be called by the Chair.

Vice-Chair Brooks Buck expressed that she doesn't have a problem with the Chair and a majority of the School Board calling a meeting, but what she does have a problem with is the calling of a special meeting in the middle of a pandemic

and calling it a week after the regular meeting just to talk about board members' views that were not accepted, and if a meeting is called it should require some urgency. Something needs to be put in place to explain the reasons for special meetings. Chair Byrum expressed her agreement that the Chair or the majority of the members seeing there should be a real need for the meeting should be allowed to call for a Special Meeting. She also suggested that the Superintendent may be able to call a special meeting. The Superintendent would most likely notify the Chair if a meeting was necessary. Both agreed that it should be an emergency or real urgent need for one. Attorney Waller would draft some language for the Committee to consider at the next Policy Review meeting.

- Attorney Waller mentioned that they should be getting the booklet with all the policy changes soon and then we would schedule quarterly meetings to discuss proposed changes to School Board policies.

- Next meeting will be determined at a later date.