

POLICY REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Curtis R. Milteer Sr. Recreational Center
Conference Room
132 Robertson Street, Suffolk, VA 23438
February 26, 2024

Present:

Members

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

Participants

- ✓ Dr. John B. Gordon III, *School Superintendent*
- ✓ Wendell M. Waller, Esq. *School Board Attorney*
- ✓ Renee Davenport, *Legal Administrative Assistant*

Attendees

- ✓ Mrs. Kimberly Slingluff, *School Board Member*
- ✓ Member of the public

➤ Meeting called to order.

- Dr. Judith Brooks-Buck called the meeting to order.
- The minutes were approved for the meetings of October 23, 2023 and November 27, 2023.

➤ Unfinished Business

- There was no unfinished business.

➤ New Business

Section 2-2.7 Policy Review Committee.

- Dr. Brooks-Buck read the changes that are recommended. Vice-Chair Howell asked if this is common practice among other school divisions. Attorney answered in the affirmative. This proposed revision clearly indicates that any change, addition or revision to policies of the School Board must first be presented to the Policy Review Committee and that the School Board cannot revise any policy or vote for the adoption of a new policy that has not been first reviewed by the Policy Review Committee. This will avoid the random revision and/or adoption of policies during a public meeting of the School Board that have not been first properly vetted by the Policy Review Committee. After discussion regarding this policy, the committee agreed to move this on to the Board for a first reading.

Section 2-2.6.1 School Board Norms and Protocols.

- Attorney Waller reviewed the changes that are recommended. Several changes are being recommended to the policy relative to school board norms. Subsection A(6) thru A(16) incorporates in school board norms language from the code of

ethics that is presented each year for adoption by the School Board. This will avoid the need for a public vote each year on the Code of Ethics, which resulted in some consternation this year by Board Members who were reluctant to vote in favor of the Code of Ethics.

This suggested change in policy will also revise protocols found at Subsection B(5) that restricts communications by School Board members with subordinate administrators unless the school superintendent is first notified. This change in protocols will also require that notice be given to the school superintendent when a Board Member communicates with employees of Suffolk Public Schools unless the communication pertains to a family member over which the Board Member has legal or physical custody and is responsible for the family member's educational progress. Committee members voiced their concerns with this policy regarding the pros and cons of having discussions with employees in relations to the day-to-day operations of the superintendent. Dr. Gordon addressed his concern on comments made during the discussion. The committee agreed to bring this policy to the full Board for the first reading.

Section 2-3.2 Business of the School Board

- Attorney Waller reviewed the changes. Additional language is being proposed under Subsection E that would prohibit a Board Member from placing an item on the meeting agenda and then simultaneously calling for the School Board to vote on the added item. Items can only be added to the agenda consistent with the policy of the board. Any member of the School Board can request that an item be added to the agenda by submitting a request in writing to the board chair and school superintendent indicating the item to be added. The request must be submitted at least 14 days before the scheduled meeting. The board chair will then poll members of the school board and ask if they would like to have the item added. If one board member objects, the item is then voted on at the upcoming meeting of the school board to determine whether the item should be added to the next regular meeting of the school board. This change in policy prohibits items from being added to the agenda without there being adequate notice to the public. Members of the public are given an opportunity to comment on items that appear on the published agenda. The committee agreed to bring this policy to the full Board for the first reading.

Section 7-20.3 Search of Registry

- Dr. Brooks-Buck reviewed the changes in this policy. Attorney Waller stated that this change in policy was presented at your January meeting. The change from the January meeting is a strike through in what now appears in Subsection C. When information is obtained that indicates that a job applicant is the subject of a founded case of child abuse or neglect, the applicant will be denied employment. The deleted language indicated that the applicant could be employed, but the employment would later be rescinded. The committee agreed to bring this policy back to the full Board for reconsideration.

Section 7-24.1 Assignment and Reassignment

- Attorney Waller reviewed the changes by stating that this policy revision will allow the school superintendent, by way of regulations, to determine the date by which employees are to submit transfer request. The current policy provides that requests are to be submitted by July 15th. Dr. Gordon explained to the committee

why this policy was requested by the Human Resources Director. The change will allow more time for the principals to work with each other for any changes and transfers that are needed within the schools before the end of the school year. Vice-chair Howell asked if we are setting a date in policy? Attorney Waller responded that this would be set in the regulations as the dates can differ going forward and this gives some flexibility in case there needs to be another change without having to come back to the board. Transfer requests are all part of an administrative process.

Section 9-11.3 Prohibited Conduct

- Dr. Brooks-Buck stated the changes. This policy was presented and approved at the January meeting of the School Board. Board Member Riddick voiced concerns regarding the 24-hour notice given to parents when their child is the victim of bullying. Board Member Riddick wanted there to be some accountability for providing notice to parents. Dr. Gordon indicated that the challenge is that sometimes it takes longer than 24 hours to complete the investigation. The notifications can also skew the data that is presented at the end of the year. It's important for the Board to understand that we are not going to look at this as a one for one where the number of cases may not match to the number of bullying incidents. Attorney Waller added that what will be reported are the number of allegations and that number may differ from the actual number of founded cases of bullying. Mrs. Byrum added that when we get the report we should have something stipulating the difference. The added language will require the school superintendent to ensure compliance and report to the School Board the total number of notices issued by each school in the division by July 30th of each school year.

Section 10-11.2 Use of School Property

- The current policy regarding use of school property is recommended for deletion in its entirety and new policy put in its place. The new policy will prohibit use of school property by outside groups when:
 - (1) Classes are in session
 - (2) Use would violate existing laws
 - (3) Use conflicts with a use previously approved
 - (4) Person requesting use is not at least 21 years of age, does not reside in the City, and is not an active member of the organization
 - (5) Use conflicts with policies of SPS
 - (6) Previous use was not satisfactorily completed or regulations violated
 - (7) Use would create an unacceptable risk to persons or property
 - (8) Organization has engaged in conduct that violates law
 - (9) Organization promotes use of illegal substances, related paraphernalia or improper use of firearms
 - (10) Applicant provided false information or misrepresentation

5. Business by Committee Members

- **None**

6. Adjournment

- **Meeting was adjourned.**