

# POLICY REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Curtis R. Milteer Sr. Recreational Center  
Conference Room  
132 Robertson Street, Suffolk, VA 23438  
March 25, 2024

## Present:

### Members

- ✓ Dr. Judith Brooks-Buck, **School Board Member**
- ✓ Mrs. Phyllis Byrum, **School Board Member**
- ✓ Mrs. Kimberly Slingluff, **School Board Member**

### Participants

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

### Attendees

- ✓ Member of the public

## ➤ Meeting called to order.

- Dr. Judith Brooks-Buck called the meeting to order.
- The minutes were approved for the meeting of February 26, 2024.

## ➤ Unfinished Business

- There was no unfinished business.

## ➤ New Business

### • Section 2-2.1:1 Site Visits, Day-to-Day Operations.

Dr. Brooks-Buck asked Attorney Waller to review this new policy. Attorney Waller stated that this is a new policy that seeks to incorporate in policy the motion passed at the February meeting of the School Board and suspended during the March meeting to allow the Policy Review Committee an opportunity to develop a policy governing site visits by School Board Members. The draft policy seeks to balance the interests of School Board members to conduct site visits with the superintendent's responsibilities regarding day-to-day operations of Suffolk Public Schools. The policy states that the school superintendent is responsible for the day-to-day operations of Suffolk Public Schools. It also provides a definition for day-to-day operations. Day-to-Day operations include regular activities and task of the school superintendent to ensure the smooth functioning and ongoing success of Suffolk Public Schools. Day-to-Day operations include all duties and responsibilities assigned to the school superintendent by Virginia Code, regulations of the Virginia Department of Education, policies of the School Board, and the superintendent's contract of employment.

The policy goes on to state that members of the School Board are encouraged to conduct site visits of any PreK-12 school once each grading period for the following

reasons: (1) to become familiar with school operations; (2) to maintain contact with building employees; and (3) to increase understanding actual educational practices. The policy specifically states that site visits are not for (1) the purpose of inspecting school conditions; (2) evaluating staff performance; or (3) gathering information. This is all part of the Day-to-Day operations of the school superintendent. The policy also sets forth clearly defined expectations when members of the School Board conduct site visits.

- (1) Must notify the superintendent
- (2) Must sign in
- (3) Must wear badge
- (4) Respectful behavior required
- (5) Report to office of school administrator or designee
- (6) No visits allowed during standardized testing
- (7) Must be accompanied by building administrator
- (8) Not allowed entry into classrooms unless invited by classroom teacher or accompanied by administrator
- (9) Must not be disruptive of the teaching and learning environment

Board Member Riddick had indicated at an earlier meeting that policies needed to have teeth. This policy has an enforcement mechanism. The school superintendent may report to the chair of the School Board when any member of the School Board Visits a PreK-12 school and does not adhere to the policy. Upon receiving notice of the alleged violation, the chair schedules a special public meeting of the school board to receive testimony and evidence regarding the alleged violation. If the violation is found by the School Board, the member receives a public censor.

Board Member Slingluff noted that she didn't not see other facilities besides school mentioned in the policy which is a concern. She also asked if the policy prohibits going to the schools in the summer. Dr. Brooks-Buck asked what would board members want to see during the summer in schools when the schools are reorganizing and getting ready for the new school year. Conversation ensued regarding the necessity of site visits at facilities as well as the administrative responsibilities of the superintendent. We can always take any complaints about things we see going in the schools to Dr. Gordon. Conversation continued about intent on the part of board members that can be subjective and how important it is to follow the process. Mrs. Byrum commented on how in the past we have had a school board member go into the school and took pictures. Instead of following procedures and talking to the Superintendent, she posted pictures of what she saw on Facebook. Some people have bad intentions and do not want to follow the rules and that is why we are in this position. She commented on how events happen so much in schools that may change the course of the day and it's important to follow procedures because we don't know what is going on. We do need a policy to go by and take seriously the norms and protocols, the VSBA training that we have been given and unfortunately, we are seeing these things this day. Committee agreed to create an additional policy to address visiting facilities as well as changing the visitation policy to indicate that the norms and protocols policy will be enforced when board members are not visiting schools properly. Board members can be censored because they are violating their own rules. Attorney Waller will email suggested changes prior to the

board meeting.

### **Section 2-2.1:2 Statement of Purpose, School Activities.**

- Attorney Waller reviewed the changes that are recommended. Board Member Riddick emphasized the need for greater Board engagement. This policy will encourage Board Members to attend school activities. This will enable Board Members to become more familiar with programs and activities of Suffolk Public Schools. Board Members are to attend at least four (4) school activities during the year and report in writing on those activities at any regularly scheduled meeting of the School Board. There is also a definition for “school activities” and they include all school activities whether they are school sponsored or school-approved, an event or activity, occurring on or off of school property. At the last School Board meeting in June, the chair provides a written report detailing those school activities attended by members of the School Board. Language will be added to say “events open to the public”. Conversation ensued on having a written report as an informational item of events visited by school board meetings.

### **Section 2-2.7 School Board Standing Committees**

- Attorney Waller reviewed the proposed changes. SECEP and Governor’s School were omitted from the list of boards that members of the School Board serve on. They have been added in Subsection B. A new subsection D has also been added which will allow the chair to remove any Board Member from a committee who is absent from three scheduled meetings a year. Attorney Waller stated that there are members of the School Board who do not attend committee meetings and do not let the alternate know to attend the meeting in their stead; this is the driving force behind this policy change. Committee agreed to change the policy to say standing committee or board and two scheduled meeting instead of three.

### **Section 6-4.2 Developing Specifications**

- Attorney Waller stated that this policy was developed based on concerns raised by Board Member Riddick. When new schools are being built or existing schools renovated, any committee appointed by the school superintendent and responsible for developing educational specifications will include the chair and vice-chair of the School Board. Dr. Brooks-Buck asked if this policy addresses ceremonies? Attorney Waller stated that it does not.

## **5. Business by Committee Members**

- **None**

## **6. Adjournment**

- **Meeting was adjourned.**