

POLICY REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
Suffolk City Hall
442 W. Washington Street,
Council Chambers Conference Room
Suffolk, VA 23434
April 6, 2023

Present:

Members

- ✓ Dr. Dawn Brittingham, ***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, ***School Board Attorney***
- ✓ Renée Davenport, ***Administrative Assistant***

Attendees

- ✓ Mrs. Kimberly Slingluff, ***School Board Member***
- ✓ Ms. Margie Irwin
- ✓ Dr. Deborah Wahlstrom

➤ **Meeting called to order.**

- Dr. Judith Brooks-Buck called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone.

➤ **Review of approval of minutes from 4-6-23 meeting.**

- Dr. Brooks-Buck asked if anyone had any corrections that needed to be made to minutes that were previously emailed to the committee. None were noted. Mrs. Byrum moved that the minutes be approved and Dr. Brittingham seconded it. The minutes were approved.

➤ **Unfinished Business**

- There was no unfinished business.

➤ **New Business**

Section 5-4.5 — Special Use of School Buses. Dr. Brooks-Buck reviewed the changes of the policy. Attorney Waller stated that this will allow the School Board, if it chooses to do so, to contract with third parties for use of school buses for public purposes, including the transportation of the elderly. The third party is required to reimburse Suffolk Public Schools

for use of its buses, must have adequate insurance coverage, and hold Suffolk Public Schools harmless for such use. This is permitted by Virginia Code Section 22.1-176.1.

Dr. Buck asked if we had been asked to do this. Dr. Gordon stated that it has not to his knowledge. Mrs. Byrum asked if this will include situations like when Virginia Beach asks us to provide buses maybe for an event like Ferrell coming. Attorney Waller answered that it could. Dr. Gordon added that we would basically have to develop a contract which would include the hourly rate of the bus driver and the fuel used, asking estimated miles driven for such an event.

Dr. Brittingham asked what is the advantage of a school system being able to do this? Attorney Waller replied that it would be a public service to the community at-large. Mrs. Byrum replied that we do a lot of that working together with the City. Attorney Waller commented that a good example of that would be “joint-use facilities” that we have in the buildings. Dr. Brooks-Buck explained that we have “joint-use facilities” in our community with the parks and recreation department in Northern Shores using the gymnasium, in the Chuckatuck community they use King’s Fork and others. We have joint-use facilities agreements with the City because Suffolk is so big and where they don’t have community schools in the communities, we facilities have joint use agreements for the use of the facilities. Mrs. Byrum reiterated that we would come up with a cost for such a use, such as with the insurance? Dr. Gordon said that Anthony Hinds would probably handle that as some time of facility use agreement since we haven’t had this type of situation before. Dr. Brittingham asked if we could contract with a 3rd party that has buses and our drivers would be used if we provided such a service? Attorney Waller replied that they would make use of Suffolk Public Schools buses. There being no further questions, it was recommended that the policy will be moved on to the Board for the first reading.

Section 5-5.2 — Adequate Nutrition Program Required. Attorney Waller stated that this proposed policy revision provides that Suffolk Public Schools cannot deny any student the opportunity to participate in any extracurricular activity because of a meal debt. It also adds language regarding participation in student meal programs sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Dr. Gordon stated with we don’t have meal debt, everything is free. This policy revision is permitted by Virginia Code Section 22.1-79.7 and 22.1-79.1:1. There being no further questions, it was recommended that the policy will be moved on to the Board for the first reading.

Section 5-8.1 — Definitions; Required Contract Terms. Attorney Waller stated that this proposed policy revision has been recommended by VSBA. It expands what is required in contracts entered into between local school divisions and companies that provide website, mobile application or other online services to local school divisions.

Dr. Gordon explained that the language basically tells you the type of documentation for example a “Word” document would be scanned into. The majority of us use PDF’s, which means “portable document format” which is a way to keep someone for editing a document. So this basically is expanding or defining on what those machine-readable performances are. There being no further questions, it was recommended that the policy will be moved on to the Board for the first reading.

Section 8-1.4 — Early Identification. Attorney Waller stated that this proposed policy revision requires that high school students be given information to assist them in their future plans after graduation. High school students are to be given information regarding costs and benefits of different educational and certificate programs as collected and compiled by

VDOE and the Council of Higher Education. This is something that the Virginia Code 22.1-206.2 requires. Dr. Buck reiterated that this is something that we do already, so we are ahead of the game. Dr. Gordon stated that goal is that you develop the “exploration” at the elementary level, “interest” at the middle school level, and more specifics of what students what to do with the Centers, or dual enrollment, or anything to provide them opportunities to get hands-on experiences with those jobs. He continued with this is part of our college and career plan that we have been doing for years. There being no further questions, it was recommended that the policy will be moved on to the Board for the first reading.

Section 8-3.1 — School Year Defined. Attorney Waller stated that we have move the language from 8-3.3 and 8-3.4 into this one policy. This proposed policy revision reinforces that the length of the school year is at least 180 teaching days or 990 teaching hours. It also offers language that Suffolk Public Schools offers in-person instruction. Dr. Buck asked Attorney Waller, what would be some of the exceptions noted in paragraph A as “except as otherwise permitted”? Attorney Waller replied that an exception would be severe weather conditions or other emergency conditions that result in the closing of a school for in-person instruction, such as if we have another pandemic. Mrs. Byrum noted that social “sciences” needs to be corrected. There being no further questions, it was recommended that the policy will be moved on to the Board for the first reading.

Section 8-3.3 and Section 8-3.4 — Length of School Day and Standard School Day for Grades K-12 - Both policies are recommended for deletion because they are covered in Policy Section 8-3.1.

Section 8-4.1 — Curriculum requirement generally. Attorney Waller stated that this proposed policy revision includes language regarding curriculum development by Suffolk Public Schools. The curriculum is a coherent and comprehensive plan for teaching and learning built upon a framework that promotes continuity and the cumulative acquisition and application of skills. This is language that came down from VSBA as to what basic curriculum should include. There being no further questions, it was recommended that the policy will be moved on to the Board for the first reading.

Section 8-9.1 — Physical Education Program – Attorney Waller stated that this proposed policy revision adds language that any physical education class in grades seven and eight must include at least one hour of personal safety training per school year that is developed and delivered in partnership with the local law enforcement agency. The training must consist of situational safety awareness training and social media education. This is required the Standards of Quality found at Virginia Code Section 22.1-253.13:1, subsection (15). There being no further questions, it was recommended that the policy will be moved on to the Board for the first reading.

Section 8-10.1 — Drug Education. Attorney Waller noted a correction on the policy correcting the word additive to addictive in bullet (iv). This proposed policy revision will require that Suffolk Public Schools provide instruction concerning gambling and its addictive potential. This is required by Virginia Code Section 22.1-206. There being no further questions, it was recommended that the policy will be moved on to the Board for the first reading.

Section 8-11.1 — Family Live Education in General. Dr. Buck read the changes to this

policy. Attorney Waller indicated that this proposed policy revision will require Suffolk Public Schools to include as part of its Family Life Curriculum information regarding human trafficking of children. This has been added to the high school curriculum. There being no further questions, it was recommended that the policy will be moved on to the Board for the first reading.

Section 1-8.4:1 — Evaluations Fair and & Comprehensive. Attorney Waller stated that this is a new policy regarding the evaluation of School Board employees. The term of office of School Board members ends on December 31st of an election year. New members coming onboard will be expected to evaluate those employees by July 1st. However, new Board members would have only had six months to evaluate the employee's performance. This new policy will require outgoing Board Members before leaving office to provide a narrative evaluation of the superintendent, school board attorney and board clerk that incorporates standards set forth in their evaluation instrument together with data to support the evaluator's narrative for the period July 1st thru December 31st. The incoming School Board Member will be required to consider the outgoing Board Member's narrative for that six-month period when evaluating the employee. Dr. Buck indicated that she had some concerns about that for several reasons. Each of the three people are established in Suffolk. With the Superintendent there is a State instrument with multiple, very detail specifications for evaluation. A narrative can leave an evaluation open to interpretation. If it's not specified in our policy what the definition might be of the narrative, it leaves a lot up to interpretation. She continued with SPS has also adopted a policy for the attorney's evaluation with descriptors and certain specifics about evaluations, and with the clerk's as well. Dr. Buck continued about "narratives" using a comment that she saw online regarding Dr. Gordon's fraternity bracelet which was a false "narrative". Narrative would leave the door open for all sorts of things that are not based in fact and so she would have a problem with that. Unless the narrative was based on the elements that are in the evaluations for each, the narrative would have to be data or fact based and not based on someone's opinion of what they read. If we did a policy, the narrative would have to be based on the objective elements that are in the evaluation.

Dr. Brittingham asked why would we not have the outgoing member use the same evaluation tool as is normally used? What was the thought behind having them provide a narrative and how much weight would it have in the evaluation? Attorney Waller replied that the draft policy does say that the narrative is to incorporate the standard set forth in the evaluation instrument together with data to support the evaluator's narrative, so it is tied to the evaluation instrument. He further stated that the policy could state to just complete the instrument for the six-month period and forgo the narrative all together. Mrs. Byrum added that there is a comment section on the evaluation tool and that would allow for some sort of narrative. Dr. Brittingham added that the outgoing person would be able to speak to why I chose to evaluate the way they did and that would be helpful, not that that narrative should have any weight per se but maybe understanding how someone was thinking six months before the evaluation was up. Dr. Buck stated that she doesn't know if that would go in someone's record but the whole notion of a narrative is what she is questioning. Legally we have to look at what could go in a person's file. Dr. Buck suggested also having some type of training on the instrument for the new person coming in. Mrs. Byrum suggested removing the word "narrative" and write into policy that we use the instrument and add additional comments of both the new and old person and possible average them together. Attorney Waller asked in clarification if the evaluation from the person leaving should be included? Dr. Brittingham said the person leaving was there for six months and we need to have their

input and the evaluation instrument should be used. Dr. Buck added that the comments need to be evidence that is provided to us to evaluate. Dr. Gordon questioned how this process would be done, if the employees would be aware of the outgoing person's evaluation and this may be an indication of creating mid-year evaluation. Dr. Buck suggested a formative rather than a summative evaluation. Attorney Waller commented that he is wondering how the process will work because elections are in November and the person will not know whether they have been reelected or not until after the election is over which means you have a short period of time between November and December to do the evaluation and give the person time to challenge the evaluation. He is not sure that there is enough time to go through that whole process, might have to look at having a special meeting. Policy will be tabled until the language and the process can be worked out for implementation.

➤ **Business by Committee Meetings.**

- No other business concerns addressed.

➤ **Next meeting to be on May 11th at 4:15 PM.**

➤ **Meeting was adjourned.**