

Newburyport School Committee Retreat

NOTES

February 1, 2021

Welcome / Opening Comments / Introductions

Mayor Reardon welcomed everyone to the meeting. He introduced the school committee members and thanked Sarah Hall for coordinating the retreat. Mayor Reardon introduced Michelle McNulty, of Murphy, Lamere & Murphy and thanked her for providing this workshop.

Newburyport School Committee Workshop

Facilitator: Michelle McNulty, Esq.

A presentation was provided that covered (1) roles of the school committee, (2) conflict of interest issues, and (3) school committee communications. After an introduction of general law, the following areas were discussed:

Role of the School Committee

- Hiring / Contracting
 - SC selects and sets terms for a Superintendent, Business Manager & Special Ed Director
 - SC creates the Ass't Superintendent position, and approves compensation & hiring
 - Superintendent brings the candidates to the School Committee
 - Appoints/approves new hires
- Approving the budget
- Educational goals & policy
 - School Committee establishes; Superintendent implements
- Day to Day operations handled by the Superintendent and administrators (i.e. personnel matters, performance evaluations)
- Review of body vrs individual, access to information, visits to schools, and directives to faculty/staff, and inquiries of information

***Brian Callahan** asked how our hiring policy is written, and if there was a hiring manual. Sean Gallagher will look into this.

Conflict of Interest Issues

- Review of prohibited actions
- Areas of risks, along with examples
- Ethics Training
- Personal Liability

School Committee Communication

- Reminder that all communications are public
- Utilize official school email
- Confidentiality
- Ethics Violations
- Open Meeting Law considerations
- Social Media
- Review everything before sending / posting

***Steve Cole** asked what is the best way to clear information from Executive Sessions. **Michelle McNulty** advised that notes from executive sessions should be revisited on a regular basis. Once the reason for the executive session has expired, then the notes can be released. Confidentiality is important and must be retained therefore identifying information needs to be redacted before being released.

***Steve Cole** asked if release of Executive Notes must be voted on. Answer = Yes, approve the minutes and vote to release them.

***Juliet Walker** commented that a best practice for email, in general, is do not reply “all” to an email sent to the entire School Committee. It is better to “blind copy” all members. You are able to use the SC group email address in the BCC field.

***Michelle McNulty** advised that if a SC member receives an email from the public, send it to the Vice Chair.

Bruce Menin asked about Facebook posts. **Michelle McNulty** noted that Facebook is a public page and all SC members should be careful using “likes” or sharing opinions as you run the chance of deliberating if there are discussions/opinions. All School Committee related topics should be discussed in a meeting.

***Juliet Walker** would like a better understanding of the SC Facebook page, who handles and if there are any guidelines.

***Sheila Spalding** suggested that a disclaimer regarding comments be added to the SC Facebook.

Website Upgrade

- Hoping to have the upgrade done in July; in a few weeks they will start mapping it out;
- New website will have two social media components
- Upgrade will include translation ability and visually impaired accommodations.

***Mayor Reardon** noted that the SC would not need a Facebook page if the website upgrades covers it all.

***Juliet Walker** would like to see all sports teams have the same “app”.

Overview of Subcommittees

Finance Subcommittee

- Next meeting will be held on February 17, 2022.
- Brian Callahan would like to clarify fees and language about additional fees for each sport at the next FINCOM meeting.
- Brian Callahan asked if the district could negotiate pricing with vendors, or buy/resell equipment.
- Sean Gallagher is working on the presentation for the next budget meeting to be held on March 1, 2022.
- Brian Callahan would like to discuss increasing the bus transportation fee at the next FINCOM meeting. Phil Littlehale stated the bus fee has been \$300 for the past 7 years.

Policy Subcommittee

- A meeting was held on January 24th, and another will be held on February 14, 2022. Trying to hold the meetings on the second Monday of each month.
- Discussions are ongoing for cleaning up the website. One idea is to archive policies from 2017 and older, then just post new ones. Then perhaps update the book annually.
- Also discussing how to handle updating all the existing policies.
- Master copies will be kept at Central Office.

Joint Ed Subcommittee

- Meetings will be scheduled the day after School Committee is held (i.e. typically first Tuesday of each month). February 8th will be their first meeting.
- Looking to exchange information at these meetings.

Superintendent Evaluation Subcommittee

- Bruce Menin will look at the last template and make any necessary changes.
- Bruce distributes the evaluation forms, collects the forms, then combines all the notes and ratings together.

CISL Adhoc Committee

- Meetings generally are held the last Monday of the month. Next meeting is 2/15.
- Perhaps at next retreat discuss changing this to a Subcommittee.

Miscellaneous

- There was discussion as to how to increase the student rep involvement at School Committee meetings, and whether there were any rules/policy to have a student rep on the School Committee or state level Council. Some ideas were to provide the reps. with upcoming agenda topics they can choose to weigh in on (placing that topic at the

beginning of the agenda). Or, have various student reps that contribute in different ways. Or simply ask the reps what they would like to do.

- There was discussion related to storage and assignment of files as there isn't a formal policy and everybody generally uses their own computers. One idea was to set up a shared Google drive.