

Newburyport School Committee Retreat

NOTES

January 13, 2021

Welcome / Opening Comments / Introductions

Mayor Holaday introduced Dorothy Presser, Field Director of the MA Association of School Committees (MASC) and provided information about her background. This was followed by introductions of each School Committee member.

Newburyport School Committee Workshop

Facilitator: Dorothy Presser

Roles & Responsibilities of School Committee

Main responsibility of the School Committee according to the National School Board Association is continuous improvement and student achievement. Attributes that have a high impact on student achievement:

- Vision
- Accountability to move the vision forward
- Data
- Foster relationships (among the committee, school and community)
- Collaboration
- Trust
- Respect
- Set goals and monitor progress
- Engage in self-governance & professional development

Understand and Respect Roles

School Committee leads from a governance viewpoint and is the bridge between the community and the Superintendent.

Superintendent leads from a management viewpoint and is the bridge between the staff and the School Committee.

Both have the responsibility for promoting trust and mutual respect in their relationships.

Full School Committee oversees the Superintendent, not individual members

School Committee Code of Ethics

Areas of responsibilities:

- Community responsibility
- Serve the needs of all students and the community
- Responsibility to school administration
- Responsibility to fellow members

Dorothy Presser reviewed SC Member Code of Ethics for relationships with the community, school administration, as well as each other.

Various situations / strategies were discussed:

- Make sure information is shared amongst all SC members
- Make decisions in the meeting
- Do not make promises in advance (community, newspaper etc)
- Avoid influencing other SC members
- Sharing information that is already out there with the community is fine

Role of the Chair

To guide the work of the school committee to protect the committee

Help keep the committee focused on the mission, values, goals, and student achievement

Grow new leadership by sharing leadership responsibilities

Legislative Responsibilities of School Committee

Work with Superintendent to ensure educational goals are established

- Ensure goals are in place and well-articulated
- Goals are defined based on community vision and values
- Monitor progress of goals
 - Data
 - School improvement plans align back to district goals
 - Presentations at SC meetings to report on progress
- All work being done aligns back to the district goals

Enact Policies: The group discussed what is policy, and where policy can be found. And reviewed which tasks were policy related versus administrative.

- Policy is “what and why”; procedure is “how”
- Make sure policies are aligned

- Policy can be found in many places (i.e. policy manual, budget, handbooks)

Approve and monitor the budget

- Have a basic understanding of school finance (where money comes from & goes)
- Budget is the biggest resource to implement goals
- Budget decisions should be aligned to goals
- Reviewing and signing warrants
- Monitor spending (i.e. via reports)

Hiring

- Hire and evaluate the superintendent
- Provide advice and consent on various other positions
 - Superintendent brings qualified candidates to the committee
- Hire and retain legal counsel
- Establish Personnel Policy
- Compensation
- Employer of record on collective bargaining agreements

Policies and Protocols

Before the meeting

- David Hochheiser would like the ability to submit questions pertaining to agenda items before the meeting, and receiving answers and/or confirmation of receipt.
- Bruce Menin suggested the need for a more streamlined process for developing a list of items to go on the agenda.
- Mayor Holaday and Brian Callahan suggested resurrecting Michael Luken's monthly agenda "to do" list, which could be used to develop a yearly calendar.
- Brian Callahan suggested using a project management tool.
- David Hochheiser suggested that a portion of each meeting be used to discuss old/new business.
- Sheila Spalding suggested sending things through subcommittees before they come to the full committee
- David Hochheiser would like to receive supporting materials earlier (i.e. 3 days before).

At the meeting

- Brian Callahan stated every item on the agenda should have two sentences about what's going on so people have better information for Public Comments (including subcommittee and superintendent reports). Also, the information needs to go out sooner.
- David H., Brian C., and Sean R. thought it may be a good idea to include minutes of subcommittee meetings in the school committee meeting packet.

- Brian Callahan thinks it would be beneficial to occasionally have a Q&A dialogue for Public Comments.
- Brian Callahan and Sheila Spalding suggested extending Public Comment to more than 2 minutes, perhaps 3 minutes if you have five or less people.
- Mayor Holaday mentioned the success of past public forums that included Q&A, and the district had wanted to do more of these, but then the pandemic hit.
- Mayor Holaday and Sean Reardon commented that length of meetings sometimes is a problem. Dorothy Presser suggested providing presenters with clear guidelines about what you want to hear may help. She will send her Staff Presentation Guide to the committee.
- Sean Reardon would like to see presentations in the packet, before the meeting.
- Mayor Holaday suggested separating school presentations instead of having them all on one night in order to really focus on one school. Dorothy Presser advised that more advance notice be given to presenters to allow ample time for preparations.
- Dorothy Presser reminded everyone to be very careful using technology devices during a meeting (i.e. chat). It could be an Open Meeting Law problem because you're allowing the public to participate in the meeting without the permission of the Chair.

Between meetings

- Dorothy Presser reminded members that individuals should not go directly to staff to obtain information or resolve an issue.
- Be aware of Open Meeting Laws and do not start any deliberations outside of a meeting nor on social media. Dorothy will send a Social Media Guide for School Committees.

Principles, Norms, Ethics Policies

Bruce Menin

Bruce Menin heard back from the lawyer and the document addresses questions he had.

Bruce Menin will email the document to everyone.

All agreed the document will be reviewed at the next Policy meeting, and then be included on the agenda for the next School Committee meeting.

Calendar / working meetings discussion

Sean Reardon

Sean Reardon suggested this item be discussed in session at the next school committee meeting.

Joanne Yelle will send the Mike Luken calendar to Brian Callahan.

Sheila Spalding suggested that goals should be looked at.

Mayor Holaday and Brian Callahan commented that a forum would be a good idea. Forum topics can be discussed at the next meeting.

Warrants

Motion

On a motion by Mayor Holaday and seconded by Bruce Menin it was

VOTED: To approve, receive and forward to the City Auditor for payment the following warrant.

\$22,565.97

Motion Passed Unanimously

Motion

On a motion by Mayor Holaday and seconded by Sean Reardon it was

VOTED: To approve, receive and forward to the City Auditor to make payment and deduct the funds from the school's account.

\$34,528.60

Motion Passed Unanimously

Motion

On a motion by Bruce Menin and seconded by Sean Reardon it was

VOTED: To approve, receive and forward to the City Auditor for payment the following warrant.

\$470,807.76

Motion Passed Unanimously

2021-2022 Prekindergarten / Kindergarten updates

Sean Gallagher stated they propose no rate increases for 2021-2022. They wish to keep the current rates.

Due to the benefits seen from a 4-day schedule this school year, Sean Gallagher stated they would like to put all the programs on a 4-day schedule in 2021-2022 and have the fifth day (i.e. Friday) to service the most at risk kids.

Miscellaneous

Dave Hochheiser asked if students were going back hybrid on Tuesday (1/19). Sean Gallagher stated Cohort A will return on Tuesday, Wednesday will be remote, and Cohort B returns on Thursday. He will send out a message.

Sean Gallagher said they were on target for the public preliminary budget presentation on February 23rd.