



POLICY/COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING

MINUTES

October 29, 2024

Virtual Meeting - 4:00 p.m.

Committee Members: Randall Peach, Chair
Ellen DePinto, Beth Fiore, Jennifer Wolf

Administrative Staff: Dr. Jonathan Hart, Superintendent of Schools
Jason Bohm, SBA/Board Secretary

Minutes

1. Board Goals

Now that the board has adopted its board goals for the year, we began our meeting by coming up with action items for the two goals that are relevant to our committee: (a) governance and structure, and (b) communications.

- a. Governance and Structure. For governance and structure, we discussed as an action item improving our onboarding process for new board members, which might include surveying existing board members about their onboarding experience, as well as a process for mentoring. (Dr. Hart mentioned that the administration has already added items to the onboarding process that will take place this year.) We also discussed possibly having the board establish a governance committee which would monitor the work of the committees, though there are many details of this which would have to be addressed. In addition, we discussed offering training on Robert's Rules of Procedure and even distributing a booklet or guide on Robert's Rules to members.
- b. Communications. To enhance communications, we discussed various action items, in addition to carrying out the communications plan created by our consultant. Members' ideas included having our board briefs publicized, perhaps through the new local newspaper, or via the Township's email blast. We also discussed the possibility of having committees conduct focus groups, to interact with the public and foster an exchange of ideas.

2. Strauss Esmay Alert 233

- a. Policy 5350 – Student Suicide Prevention (con't)

The committee next discussed this policy, having to do with student suicide prevention, which had been tabled from our last meeting, so that Dr. Hart could respond to questions members had about the policy's wording. Dr. Hart reported that he discussed the policy with Strauss (our policy consultant) as well as our board attorney.

Dr. Hart recommended that we maintain the language of the policy which he noted has been our "best practice" for 15 years. Concerns were nonetheless expressed by some members about language which excluded the parents from the school counsellors' initial screening/evaluation of the child, or which required the reporting to the Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCPP) of any parent who objected to the school counsellors' recommendations. Dr. Hart recommended against changing the

wording of the policy, but he did rearrange the order of the policy's language to clarify that the requirement of reporting to the DCPD would come after the screening process and the requirement that the parent obtain medical clearance for the child to return to school. The policy as modified is on the agenda for the next (tonight's) board meeting.

3. [Policy 2530](#) - Resource Materials Review

We next began to discuss this policy, which pertains to how our district curates books and resource materials, which one member wanted to revisit in light of the state's Freedom to Read Act that was recently passed by the legislature (awaiting the governor's signature at the time of our meeting). Another member objected that we should not be revisiting policies without complying with the required protocol for doing so; this in turn led to a discussion of item no. 4 (below), which sets forth the requirements for reviewing policies. For example, policies can be reviewed if a recommendation is made by the board president and superintendent, or with the consensus of the full board. It was also noted that any member can always bring up a request to review a policy at a full board meeting, by way of new business. Here it was noted that Policy 2530 was properly on our agenda at the request of a member and approval of the superintendent and board president.

The committee went on to discuss the Freedom to Read Act, and the expectation that our committee will likely have to create a new policy for how we curate resources in our library, in response to the law.

4. Policy Review Protocols Discussion

a. Bylaw Governing Bylaws and Policies - [0131](#)

We discussed the bylaw setting forth the protocol for reviewing policies. The committee plans to begin a review of policies which are outdated or require revisions, or which members wish to have a further discussion on (subject to the agreement of the superintendent and the board president). Dr. Hart recommended that our next policy committee agenda include the first series of policies that we will review, with timeframes for review and a deadline to bring the revised policy to the committee.

5. HIB Policy

a. Protocols for retaining records.

Next, the committee discussed the protocol for maintaining HIB records. It was noted that there is no requirement that the district maintain a HIB charge on a student's permanent record; however, Dr. Hart recommended that, as a matter of protocol, the district should maintain a separate file to track HIB charges against a student.

6. Cell Phone Policy

Next, we discussed steps toward the creation of a cell phone policy. Dr. Hart shared guidance from the NJ Department of Education which listed factors that boards should consider when formulating cell phone policies. He also provided sample cell phone policies from other districts.

Dr. Hart also shared some of the steps already taken by the administration, including showing "Screenagers" to parents; purchasing Screenagers lessons for students; and updating student handbooks with rules such as instructing students to place cellphones in backpacks. Dr. Hart recommends gathering further information before formulating a policy, including having parent forums.

7. Agenda items: Policy 5350

8. Next Meeting: December 2, 2024 at 4:00 p.m.