

## **SCHOOL COMMITTEE OPERATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

The School Committee is responsible to the people for whose benefit the school system has been established. The Committee's current decisions will influence the course of education in our schools for years to come. The Committee and each of its members must look to the future and to the needs of all people more than the average citizen finds necessary. This requires a comprehensive perspective and long-range planning in addition to attention to immediate problems.

The School Committee's primary responsibility is to establish those purposes, programs, and procedures that will best produce the educational achievement needed by our students. The Committee is charged with accomplishing this while also being responsible for wise management of resources available to the school system. The Committee must fulfill these responsibilities by functioning primarily as a legislative body to formulate and adopt policy, by selecting an executive officer to implement policy, and by evaluating the results. It must carry out its functions openly, while seeking the comments of public, students, and staff in its decision-making processes.

Adopted by the Reading School Committee on March 26, 2007

CROSS REF.: ADA, School District Goals and Objectives

## **EVALUATION OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES**

The School Committee will periodically establish realistic objectives related to Committee procedures and relationships. The following areas of School Committee operations and relationships are representative of those in which objectives may be set and progress appraised:

1. Communication with the public
2. School Committee - Superintendent relationships
3. School Committee member development and performance
4. Policy development
5. Educational leadership
6. Fiscal management
7. School Committee meetings
8. Performance of subcommittees of the School Committee
9. Interagency and governmental relationships

Implied in the concept of evaluation is an assumption that individuals and committees are capable of improvement. The School Committee believes that its performance will be improved if evaluation is carried out systematically in accordance with good planning, conscientious follow-through, and careful assessment of results.

Adopted by the Reading School Committee on March 26, 2007

## SCHOOL COMMITTEE LEGAL STATUS

State law provides that:

Every town at its annual meeting shall in every year when the term of office of any incumbent expires, and except when other provision is made by law, choose by ballot from its registered voters the following town officers for the following terms of office:

. . . six members of the School Committee for terms of three years . . .

The School Committee is the governing board of the town's public school system. Although its functions as a duly elected committee of town government, the School Committee has, unlike other town boards, autonomous and absolute authority within limitations established by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to carry out the educational policies of the state and guide the educational process.

Established by law

Adopted by the Reading School Committee on March 26, 2007

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. 41:1 and 71:37 specifically, but powers and duties of School Committees are established throughout the General Laws of Massachusetts Relating to School Committees

CROSS REFS.: AA, School District Legal Status  
BBA, School Committee Powers and Duties

## SCHOOL COMMITTEE POWERS AND DUTIES

The School Committee has all the powers conferred upon it by state law and must perform those duties mandated by the state. These include the responsibility and right to determine policies and practices and to employ a staff to implement its directions for the proper education of the children of the community.

The Committee takes a broad view of its functions. It sees them as:

1. Legislative or policy making. The Committee is responsible for the development of policy as guides for administrative action and for employing a Superintendent who will implement its policies.
2. Appraisal. The Committee is responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of its policies and their implementation.
3. Provision of financial resources. The Committee is responsible for adoption of a budget that will enable the school system to carry out the Committee's policies.
4. Public relations. The Committee is responsible for providing adequate and direct means for keeping the local citizenry informed about the schools and for keeping itself and the school staff informed about the needs and wishes of the public.
5. Educational planning and evaluation. The Committee is responsible for establishing educational goals and policies that will guide the Committee and staff for the administration and continuing improvement of the educational programs provided by the school district.

Adopted by the Reading School Committee on March 26, 2007

LEGAL REF.: M.G.L. 71:37 specifically, but powers and duties of School Committees are established throughout the Massachusetts General Laws.

CROSS REF.: BB School Committee Legal Status

## **SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBER AUTHORITY**

### Authority

Because all powers of the School Committee derived from state laws are granted in terms of action as a group, members of the School Committee have authority only when acting as a Committee legally in session.

The School Committee will not be bound in any way by any statement or action on the part of an individual member except when such statement or action is a result of specific instructions of the Committee.

No member of the Committee, by virtue of his office, will exercise any administrative responsibility with respect to the schools or command the services of any school employee.

The School Committee will function as a body and all policy decisions and other matters, as required by law, will be settled by an official vote of the Committee sitting in formal session.

### Duties

The duties and obligations of the individual Committee member may be enumerated as follows:

1. To become familiar with the General Laws of the Commonwealth relating to education and School Committee operations, regulations of the Massachusetts Board of Education, policies and procedures of this School Committee and school department.
2. To keep abreast of new laws and the latest trends in education.
3. To have a general knowledge of the goals, objectives, and programs of the town's public schools.
4. To work effectively with other Committee members without trying either to dominate the Committee or neglect his share of the work.
5. To respect the privileged communication that exists in executive sessions by maintaining strict confidentiality on matters discussed in these sessions, except that which becomes part of the public record, once it has been approved for release.
6. To vote and act in Committee impartially for the good of the students.
7. To accept the will of the majority vote in all cases, and to remember that he is one of a team and must abide by, and carry out, all Committee decisions once they are made.

8. To represent the Committee and the schools to the public in a way that promotes interest and support.
9. To refer questions and complaints to the proper school authorities.
10. To comply with the accepted code of ethics for School Committee members.

Adopted by the Reading School Committee on March 26, 2007

## **SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBER QUALIFICATIONS/OATH OF OFFICE**

In order to serve on the School Committee, an individual must be a registered voter in the town from which he is elected or appointed and must take an oath of office as required by law.

Each new member will present to the Committee secretary official certification of having sworn the oath before an officer duly qualified to administer oaths prior to entering on his official duties as a member of the Committee. From the town clerk, newly qualified Committee members--by law--receive, and sign a receipt for, a copy of the Massachusetts open meeting law governing the conduct of Committee meetings in general and executive sessions in particular.

Membership on a School Committee is not limited to race, color, sex, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation.

Adopted by the Reading School Committee on March 26, 2007

LEGAL REFS.:       M.G.L. 39:23B; 41:1; 41:107  
                          M.G.L. 76:5 Amended 1993

## **SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBER RESIGNATION**

An existing School Committee member who submits his resignation to the appropriate certifying authority terminates his duties at the time of his resignation unless he states in that resignation a specific time at which the resignation will take effect.

Should a School Committee member move out of the town or city, which elected him to the Committee, he shall be deemed to have vacated his office.

Adopted by the Reading School Committee on March 26, 2007

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. 41:2; 41:109



## **UNEXPIRED TERM FULFILLMENT**

When a vacancy on the School Committee occurs for any reason, the Board of Selectmen and the remaining members of the Committee share the responsibility for filling it.

As provided in the law, the School Committee will notify the Selectmen that a vacancy has been created within 30 days after it has occurred. After one week's notice has been given by the Committee to the Selectmen, so that voters of the town may have the opportunity to state their candidacy, the two governing bodies will meet to fill the vacancy by roll call vote.

For election to fill a vacancy, a candidate must receive a majority of the votes of the officers entitled to vote. The person so elected will fill the seat on the Committee until the next town election, at which time a member will be elected to serve the remainder of the term, if any.

Adopted by the Reading School Committee on March 26, 2007

LEGAL REF.: M.G.L. 41:11

## **STUDENT MEMBER OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

The Reading School Committee will have as an ex-officio non-voting member of the Committee a student appointed by the Principal of Reading Memorial High School under the terms of current legislation. This member will sit with the regularly-elected members of the School Committee at all public sessions and will receive all communications and memoranda regularly sent to the members of the Reading School Committee, except those items regarding Executive Session. The student's views and input as a representative of the student body will be welcomed.

Adopted by the Reading School Committee on March 26, 2007

**SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBER ETHICS**  
(Massachusetts Association of School Committees Code of Ethics)

Preamble

The acceptance of a code of ethics implies the understanding of the basic organization of School Committees under the Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The oath of office of a School Committee member binds the individual member to adherence to those state laws which apply to School Committees, since School Committees are agencies of the state.

This code of ethics delineates three areas of responsibility of School Committee members in addition to that implied above: (1) community responsibility; (2) responsibility to school administration; and (3) relationships to fellow Committee members.

A School Committee member in his relations with his community should:

1. Realize that his primary responsibility is to the education and safety of children
2. Recognize that his basic function is to be policy making and not administrative
3. Remember that he is one of a team and must abide by, and carry out, all Committee decisions once they are made
4. Be well informed concerning the duties of a Committee member on both a local and state level
5. Remember that he represents the entire community at all times.
6. Accept the office as a Committee member as means of unselfish service with no intent to "play politics," in any sense of the word, or to benefit personally from his Committee activities

A School Committee member in his relations with his school administration should:

1. Endeavor to establish sound, clearly-defined policies which will direct and support the administration
2. Recognize and support the administrative chain of command and refuse to act on complaints as an individual outside the administration
3. Give the chief administrator full responsibility for discharging his professional duties and hold him responsible for acceptable results
4. Refer all complaints to the administrative staff for solution and only discuss them at Committee meetings if such solutions fail

A School Committee in his relations with his fellow Committee members should:

1. Recognize that action at official meetings is binding and that he alone cannot bind the Committee outside of such meetings
2. Realize that he should not make statements or promises of how he will vote on matters that will come before the Committee
3. Uphold the intent of executive sessions and respect the privileged communications that exists in executive sessions.

4. Not withhold pertinent information on school matters or personnel problems, either from members of his own Committee or from members of other Committees who may be seeking help or information on school problems
5. Make decisions only after all facts on a question have been presented and discussed.

Adopted by the Reading School Committee on March 26, 2007

## **SCHOOL COMMITTEE ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING**

For the purpose of organizing, the School Committee annually will elect from its membership a chairperson and a vice-chairperson, who will hold their respective offices for a term of one year or until a successor is elected. The Superintendent of Schools shall preside over the process of election of the chairperson. In the event the committee is unable to elect a chairperson the presiding officer shall be the first available of the following individuals: immediate past chairperson, immediate past vice chairperson, or most senior member. This person shall serve until such time as the committee shall elect a regular chairperson.

A majority of the members of the School Committee will constitute a quorum. The election will proceed as follows:

1. Nominations for the office of chairperson will be made from the floor. The chairperson will be elected by a majority roll-call vote of the members present and voting. If no nominee receives a majority vote, the election will be declared null and void and nominations will be reopened.
2. Upon election, the new chairperson will preside, calling for the election of a vice-chairperson. The procedure used for their election will be the same as that for electing the chairperson.

Any vacancy among the officers occurring between organizational meetings will be filled by a member elected by the School Committee. The election will be conducted as described above.

Following election of officers at its organizational meeting, the School Committee may proceed into such regular or special business as scheduled on the agenda.

Adopted by the Reading School Committee on March 26, 2007

## **SCHOOL COMMITTEE OFFICERS**

### Duties of the Chairperson

The chairperson of the School Committee has the same powers as any other member of the Committee to vote upon all measures coming before it, to offer resolutions and to discuss questions. He will perform those duties that are consistent with his office and those required by law, state regulations, and this Committee. In carrying out these responsibilities, the chairperson will:

1. Sign the instruments, acts, and orders necessary to carry out state requirements and the will of the Committee
2. Consult with the Superintendent in the planning of the Committee's agendas
3. Confer with the Superintendent on crucial matters that may occur between Committee meetings
4. Appoint subcommittees and liaisons
5. Call special meetings of the Committee as found necessary
6. Be public spokesman for the Committee at all times except as this responsibility is specifically delegated to others
7. Be responsible for the orderly conduct of all Committee meetings.

As presiding officer at all meetings of the Committee, the chairperson will:

1. Call the meeting to order at the appointed time
2. Announce the business to come before the Committee in its proper order
3. Enforce the Committee's policies relating to the order of business and the conduct of meetings
4. Recognize persons who desire to speak, and protect the speaker who has the floor from disturbance or interference
5. Explain what the effect of a motion would be if this is not clear to members
6. Restrict discussion to the question when a motion is before the Committee
7. Answer all parliamentary inquiries
8. Put motions to a vote, stating definitely and clearly the vote and result thereof.

Duties of the Vice-Chairperson

The vice-chairperson of the Committee will act in the absence of the chairperson as presiding officer of the Committee and will perform such other duties as may be delegated or assigned to him.

In the event a meeting is to be held in the absence of the chairperson and the vice-chairperson, the chairperson shall appoint an acting presiding officer from the remaining members to preside over that meeting.

Adopted by the Reading School Committee on March 26, 2007

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. 71:36

Note: The treasurer of the town serves as treasurer of the School Committee.

**APPOINTED COMMITTEE OFFICIALS**

The Superintendent shall be elected by the Committee as provided by law and shall serve as secretary and perform all the duties that are prescribed by law and such other duties, not inconsistent there to, as majority of the Committee may direct.

Adopted by the Reading School Committee on March 26, 2007



## **SCHOOL COMMITTEE-SUPERINTENDENT RELATIONSHIP**

The Committee will leave to the Superintendent all matters of decision and administration that come within his scope as executive officer or as professional leader of the school system.

While the Committee reserves to itself the ultimate decision of all matters concerning general policy or expenditures of funds, it will proceed in these areas only after receiving recommendations from its executive officer. Further:

1. The Superintendent will have the privilege of asking guidance from the Committee with respect to matters of operation whenever appropriate. If it is necessary to make exceptions to an established policy, he will submit the matter to the Committee for advice and direction.
2. The Superintendent will assist the Committee in reaching sound judgments and establishing policies, and will place before the Committee all relevant facts, information, and reports necessary to keep the Committee adequately informed of situations or business at hand.

Adopted by the Reading School Committee on March 26, 2007

## **SUBCOMMITTEES OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

The School Committee may authorize the establishment of special subcommittees for special assignments and to make recommendations for committee action. For purposes of definition: a subcommittee is a small group (less than a quorum of the full committee) made up of School Committee members only. An ad hoc committee/ advisory committee is a group of broader membership (parents, teachers, administrators) whose charge may be to bring a recommendation back to the full committee for review and adoption/rejection.

1. The subcommittee will be established through action of the School Committee.
2. The subcommittee chairperson and its members will be appointed by the School Committee chairperson.
3. The subcommittee will be provided with a list of its functions and duties.
4. The subcommittee may make recommendations for School Committee action, but it may not act for the School Committee.
5. The School Committee Chairperson and Superintendent or designee will be ex-officio members of all special subcommittees.
6. A subcommittee will be dissolved by the School Committee upon completion of its assignment, or it may be dissolved by a vote of the School Committee at any time.
7. Individual subcommittee chairs will decide if they wish to have input from students and citizens.

Ad hoc committees may be formed by the School Committee and shall be disbanded upon completion of their responsibilities. No reports purporting to be the regular actions of said committees shall be presented to the School Committee unless acted upon by a majority of those present at the subcommittee meetings at which such actions were taken.

All subcommittees of the School Committee, as well as Ad-hoc committees or advisory committees established by the School Committee will conform to the requirements set forth in the Open Meeting Law (Massachusetts General Law Chapter 39, section 23A, 23B. and 23C).

Adopted by the Reading School Committee on March 26, 2007

## SCHOOL COUNCILS

This policy is designed to insure the consistent implementation throughout the Reading Public Schools of provisions of Massachusetts General Law 71:59C which requires the establishment of School Councils in each of the public schools in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

### **Purpose of the Councils**

The purposes of the School Councils are to:

1. Advise the Principal in the identification of the educational needs of the students;
2. Advise the Principal in the formulation of a school improvement plan based upon schools and system goals; and
3. Participate in a review of the annual budget proposal.
4. Assist the High School Principal in the preparation and distribution to each student and family, a student handbook setting forth the rules pertaining to the conduct of students.
5. Act in the capacity of the Wellness Committee for the school

### **Membership**

The Principal of each school has the responsibility of defining the composition of and forming a School Council pursuant to a representative process approved by the Superintendent and School Committee. The membership of the council shall consist of the following:

- The school Principal who will serve as co-chair;
- A minimum of two teachers elected by the professional staff of the school;
- A minimum of three parents elected, from among volunteers, by the parents of the respective schools, with the election conducted by the school's parent group in consultation with the Principal. (Note: the number of parent members of the Council must equal the number of professional personnel on the council.)
- At least one person selected by the Principal from interested citizens who do not have a child in the school;
- And at the high school, at least one student elected by the Student Council or student body.

When creating the School Council the following tenets will be maintained:

- School Councils should be broadly representative of the diversity of the school and school community.
- School Councils are considered municipal agencies and their members are considered municipal employees for purposes of the conflict of interest law. (M.G.L.268A)
- Elections will be conducted in a fair and open process with results announced publicly.

### **Eligibility for Membership**

- Membership shall be consistent with M.G.L. 71:59C.

### **Term of Office**

Members of the Councils will serve one, two and three year terms which will be staggered to provide continuity, except for the student member at the secondary school who will serve a one year term and is eligible for re-election. When a person resigns, an election will be held to fill the vacancy. The School Committee encourages schools to hold School Council elections prior to the close of school in June.

### **Meeting Calendar**

The first meeting of each Council must take place no later than forty (40) days after the opening day of each school year. Councils meet at least once each quarter. Meetings will be held at the school in an area designated by the Principal in accordance with the Open Meeting Law. The agenda for the meeting will be prepared by the School Councils co-chairs. Joint meetings of all School Councils may be held at the discretion of the Superintendent.

### **Meeting Procedures**

At the first meeting of the Council a member will be designated to serve as co-chair with the Principal. The meetings are to be conducted in accordance with the requirements of Massachusetts Open Meeting Law and must be posted 48 hours in advance with the Town Clerk. Meetings will be conducted in accordance with Robert's Rule of Order, each meeting will have a the prepared agenda, additional items may be added at the discretion of the co-chairs. Minutes of reach meeting will be prepared by a member of the Council designated by the co-chairs and include the date, time, place, members present, or absent and action taken at each meeting. Minutes must be filed with the Superintendent of Schools or designee.

### **Communication**

The channel for official Council communication between and among the School Councils, the Principal, the Superintendent, and the School Committee is as follows: the School Council (through the Principal) to the Superintendent, the Superintendent to the School Committee. All official council communication between parent and non-parent Council members and the school staff is initiated through the Principal. Visits to the school are arranged with the Principal.

### **Decision Making**

The Councils, by law, are to advise and assist the Principal and to serve as consultants in the formulation of educational goals for the school. Thus the formation of consensus on particular items, rather than votes, would be especially helpful to the Principal.

### **School Improvement Plan/Education Goals**

The School Improvement Plan, which establishes the school's Educational Goals, must be consistent with the educational standards and goals established by the Superintendent and the School Committee, in the District Improvement Plan and must meet the requirements of the Education Reform Law. The School Improvement Plan is submitted to the Superintendent and School Committee each year on a date established by the School Committee. The Reading School Committee will review and approve a format for School Improvement Plans in accordance with M.G.L. Chapter 71. Guidelines for issues the School Improvement Plan should address are the following:

- The educational goals for the school consistent with the goals and standards, including student performance standards, as adopted by the Massachusetts Board of Education and by the School Committee
- As assessment of the needs of the school in light of the proposed educational goals
- The enhancement of parental involvement in the life of the school, safety, and discipline
- Professional development for school staff and the allocation of professional development funds in the school budget;
- Safety and discipline;
- The maintenance of a welcoming school environment characterized by tolerance and respect for all people;
- Extra-curricular activities;
- The development of means for meeting the diverse learning needs of all students;
- Application of the District's Wellness Policy and District guidelines
- And such further subjects as the Principal, in consultation with the School Council, shall consider appropriate, except that:
  - a. The council shall have no authority over matters that are subject to Chapter 150E, the collective bargaining law, and
  - b. The council may not expand the scope of its authority beyond that established in law or expressly granted by School Committee policy.

### **Submission and Approval of the School Improvement Plan**

Because the implementation of the plan is dependent on School Committee approval, it is important that the School Council be aware of certain expectations of the School Committee regarding the school improvement plan. The school improvement plan should:

- Focus on improvement of student learning
- Specify expected student outcomes and measurable / observable results within a specified time period.
- Align with the Mission of the school district and any goals and policies of the school district.

- Support the District's Wellness Policy and guidelines
- Be consistent with state and federal law, school district policy, established curriculum and negotiated agreements.
- Clearly identify actions to be taken on how changes will be implemented.
- Include a plan on how to solicit community support for the changes to be developed.
- Indicate anticipated costs and available funding sources.
- Delineate the method of evaluating and reporting progress and results.

If the school improvement plan is not approved by the Superintendent and School Committee, it shall be returned to the Principal with specific comments as to the reason(s). The Principal shall revise the plan in cooperation with the School Council, and resubmit it for approval. If the School Committee does not review the school improvement plan within 30 days of its receipt by the committee, the plan shall be deemed to have been approved.

Adopted by the Reading School Committee on March 26, 2007

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L.71:59C

## **SCHOOL ATTORNEY**

The School Committee may use the services provided by the town counsel. The Committee and the Superintendent may seek his/her services to counsel and represent the school system at various times.

However, because the complexity of school department operations often requires specialized legal services, the Committee may also retain an attorney(s) or law firm(s) to provide additional legal services (special education, labor, special counsel, etc.).

It will be the duty of the counsel for the Committee to advise the School Committee and the Superintendent on the specific legal problems submitted to her/him. He/she will attend meetings upon request and will be sufficiently familiar with Committee policies, practices, and actions under these policies, and with requirements of the school law to enable him to offer the necessary legal advice.

Many types of legal assistance are routine and generally do not require specific Committee approval or prior notice. However, the Superintendent shall periodically advise the Committee of legal services required and seek either initial or continuing authorization for such service that may exceed budgetary authorization.

Adopted by the Reading School Committee on March 26, 2007

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. 71:37E; 71:37F

## SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The School Committee will transact all business at official meetings of the Committee. These may be either regular or special meetings, defined as follows:

1. Regular meeting: the usual official legal action meeting, held regularly
2. Special meeting: an official legal action meeting called between scheduled regular meetings to consider specific topics.
3. Retreat Meeting: An official legal action meeting held 1-3 times per year for the purpose of team building, professional development, and preliminary planning or goal setting. To support this purpose, meetings are typically held at a time and place other than regular meetings.

Every meeting of the School Committee, regular or special, will be open to the public unless an executive session is held in accordance with state law.

Adopted by the Reading School Committee on March 26, 2007

Revised by Reading School Committee on November 5, 2007

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. 39:23A; 39:23B; 39:23C

CROSS REFS.: BEC, Executive Sessions  
BEDA, Notification of School Committee Meetings



## **EXECUTIVE SESSIONS**

All meetings of the School Committee are open to attendance by the public and media representatives. However, the Committee has the right to convene in a closed executive session when it meets the following procedural conditions imposed by state law:

1. The Committee will first convene in an open session for which due notice has been given.
2. The Chair (or, in his/her absence, the presiding member) will state the purpose for the executive session.
3. A majority of the members must vote to enter the executive session, with the vote taken by roll call and recorded in the official minutes.
4. The Chair or presiding member will state before entering the executive session whether the Committee will reconvene in open session after the executive session.

The law puts specific limitations on the purposes for which executive sessions may be convened. The Committee may enter executive sessions only to deliberate:

1. The reputation, character, physical condition or mental health, rather than the professional competence, of a single individual.
2. The discipline or dismissal, including the hearing of charges against, a member of the Committee, a school department employee or student, or other individual.
3. Strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation, if an open meeting might have a detrimental effect. Collective bargaining may also be conducted.
4. The deployment of security personnel or devices.
5. Allegations of criminal misconduct or to discuss the filing of criminal complaints.
6. Transactions of real estate, if an open meeting might be detrimental to the negotiating position of the Committee or another party.
7. To comply with the provisions of any general or specific law of federal grant-in-aid requirements.
8. And to consider and interview applicants for employment (The only position that the School Committee would be involved in that might qualify would be for the position of Superintendent) This exemption only applies if it can be determined that an open meeting will have a detrimental affect in obtaining qualified applicants.
9. To meet or confer with a mediator with respect to any litigation or public business.

(In the first two cases listed, an open meeting will be held if the individual involved so requests.)

Accurate records of the proceedings conducted in executive session will be kept and may remain secret only so long as their publication would defeat the purpose of the session. The Committee will review executive session minutes for possible declassification at least once each year.

All votes taken in executive session will be recorded roll call votes, and will become part of the minutes of executive sessions.

Adopted by the Reading School Committee on March 26, 2007

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. 39:23A; 39:23B

CROSS REFS.: BDE, Subcommittee of the School Committee  
BE, School Committee Meetings  
KEB, Public Complaints about School Personnel

## **NOTIFICATION OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

As required by law, a minimum of 48 hours' advance notice will be given for any meeting of the School Committee, including all subcommittee meetings. The only exception permitted is in case of emergency, which the law defines as "a sudden, generally unexpected occurrence or set of circumstances demanding immediate action."

Notification of the dates, times, and places of regular meetings will be accomplished by periodic publication of the schedule for the ensuing months. Notification of a change in a regular meeting time or place and notification of a special meeting will be filed with the town clerk at least 48 hours in advance, as required by law.

Adopted by the Reading School Committee on March 26, 2007

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. 39:23A; 39:23B

CROSS REF.: BE, School Committee Meetings

## **AGENDA FORMAT**

The Superintendent, conferring with the Chair of the School Committee, will arrange the order of items on meetings agendas so that the Committee can accomplish its business as expeditiously as possible. The particular order may vary from meeting to meeting in keeping with the business at hand.

The Committee will follow the order of business established by the agenda except as it votes to rearrange the order for the convenience of visitors, individuals appearing before the Committee, or to expedite Committee business.

Items of business may be suggested by any School Committee member, staff member, or citizen.

The agenda will also provide for time when any citizen who wishes may speak briefly before the School Committee.

The agenda, together with supporting materials, will generally be distributed to School Committee members three days prior to the meeting to permit adequate time to prepare for the meeting.

Agendas will be posted and made available to the press.

Adopted by the Reading School Committee on March 26, 2007

## **ORDER OF BUSINESS**

The Order of Business for the School Committee shall be as follows:

- A. Call to Order
- B. Routine Matters
- C. Personnel Action
- D. Old Business
- E. New Business
- F. Information and Proposals
- G. Executive Session

Amendments to the usual order shall be made at the discretion of the chairperson.

Recognizing that a free interchange of ideas and opinions among School Department staff, members of the School Committee and Citizens in attendance is essential to good decision making, the Chair will make every effort to allow ample opportunity for them to speak on all issues before the Committee.

Proceedings of the Reading School Committee shall be governed by Roberts' Rules of Order, Revised.

Adopted by the Reading School Committee on March 26, 2007

## **RULES OF ORDER**

Robert's Rules of Order, Revised will govern the proceedings of the Committee, except when those rules are in conflict with the Committee's approved policies and regulations.

In accordance with Robert's Rules, the Committee may suspend parliamentary rules of order by a two-thirds vote.

Adopted by the Reading School Committee on March 26, 2007

## VOTING METHOD

Except on procedural matters, all votes of the School Committee will be taken by a call of the roll and the ayes and nays will be recorded in the minutes; if the vote is unanimous only that fact need be recorded.

All actions will require a majority vote of all members except as state law, Robert's Rules of Order, Revised, or policies of this Committee require a larger majority. A majority of the members of the School Committee will constitute a quorum.

A two-thirds vote will be required to suspend parliamentary rules of order.

Adopted by the Reading School Committee on March 26, 2007

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. 39:23B; 71:42; 71:50

## MINUTES

The minutes of a School Committee meeting constitute the written record of Committee actions; they are legal evidence of what the action was. Therefore, the secretary of the School Committee will be responsible for reporting in the minutes all actions taken by the Committee.

Minutes will include:

1. A statement on the nature of the meeting (regular or special), the time, the place, and the approval of the last regular and each subsequent special meeting.
2. Names of the members present or absent, annotated as to arrival and departure times, if during the meeting.
3. A complete record of official actions taken by the Committee relative to the Superintendent's recommendations, to communications, and to all business transacted. Resolutions and motions will be given in their exact wording, accompanied by the names of members moving and seconding and a record of the results of the vote. Reports and documents relating to a formal motion may be omitted if they are referred to and identified by title and date.
4. Notation of formal adjournment.

Copies of the minutes will be sent to all Committee members at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting at which the minutes are to be approved.

The approved minutes will become permanent records of the Committee. Minutes of public meetings and minutes of executive sessions that have been declassified will be in the custody of the Superintendent and forwarded to the Town Clerk who will make them available to interested citizens upon request.

Adopted by the Reading School Committee on March 26, 2007

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. 39:23B; 66:10

CROSS REF.: KDB, Public's Right To Know



## PUBLIC COMMENT AT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETINGS

All regular and special meetings of the School Committee shall be open to the public. School Committee meetings, including executive sessions are conducted in accordance with the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law.

The School Committee desires and encourages citizens of the district to attend its meetings so that they may become better acquainted with the operations and the programs of our local public schools. In addition, the Committee would like the opportunity to hear from the public on issues that affect the school district and are within the scope of the Committee's responsibilities. Therefore, the Committee has set aside a period of time at each School Committee meeting to hear from the public

Public Comment is intended to offer citizens an opportunity to express their opinion on issues of School Committee business. Should the Chair believe that an issue or question falls outside the purview of the School Committee, he/she may request that citizens direct it to the appropriate person or body so that the matter is given proper consideration.

The following process will govern Public Comment and participation at School Committee meetings:

1. The School Committee will have a 15-minute Public Comment section at each School Committee meeting, which shall generally follow the opening of the meeting. Any extension of time shall be determined by the Chair.
2. A sign-up sheet will be available as people enter the meeting, and people will speak in the order they sign up, unless more than one person wishes to speak on a single topic, in which case the Chair may call them together.
3. Any person wishing to speak must identify him or herself by name and address, and specific interest for wishing to speak. The Chair will favor, in no particular order, those speakers who are Reading residents, or, in appropriate circumstances, Town of Reading employees, parents, or guardians of Reading Public School students, or Reading Public School students.
4. Speakers will be allowed up to three (3) minutes to present their material. The presiding Chair may permit extension of this time limit.
5. Comments longer than three minutes may be presented in writing to the Committee before or after the meeting for Committee members to review and consider at an appropriate time.
6. Topics for discussion during the fifteen minute public comment segment of the agenda must be limited to those items not listed on the School Committee agenda for that meeting.
7. Improper conduct and remarks will not be allowed. Defamatory or abusive remarks are always out of order. If a speaker persists in improper conduct or remarks, the Chair may terminate that individual's privilege of address.

8. All remarks will be addressed to the Chair of the School Committee. Responses to concerns will be made only by the Superintendent or Chair of the meeting, or other members at the Chair's discretion. While the Committee and/or administration will not typically respond to citizen comments or questions posed at Public Comment, the Chair, as presiding officer of the meeting, may answer or request an answer to a question if he/she deems it expeditious.
9. The Committee will not hear complaints about school personnel or any member of the school community. Please refer to Policy KE and KEB for further detail.

In addition to the Public Comment section at each meeting, the public is invited to remain for the whole meeting and may be invited to speak on any docketed issue, at the discretion of the Chair. Should the Chair invite comments on docketed items, he/she will request that individuals in attendance who wish to speak signify as such by raising their hand.

Adopted by the Reading School Committee on March 26, 2007

Revised by the Reading School Committee on January 7, 2016

## **SPECIAL PROCEDURES FOR CONDUCTING HEARINGS**

In conducting all public hearings required by law, and others as it deems advisable, the School Committee will:

1. Give due and public notice in line with statutory requirements and seek to publicize the meeting in all local media.
2. Make available printed information on the topic of the hearing.
3. Give all persons an equal opportunity to be heard in accordance with the Committee's policy.

The Chair of the Committee will preside at the hearing.

The public will be informed at the beginning of the hearing the particular procedure that will be followed in regard to questions, remarks, rebuttals, and any time limitations or other rules that must be followed to give everyone an opportunity to be heard.

In conformance with customary hearing procedures, statements and supporting information will be presented first by the Committee, or by others for the Committee; to comment, citizens must be recognized by the chair, and all remarks must be addressed to the chair and be germane to the topic. To assure that all who wish get a chance to speak, the chair will recognize persons who have not commented previously during the hearing before recognizing persons who wish to remark a second time.

Adopted by the Reading School Committee on March 26, 2007

## **SCHOOL COMMITTEE POLICY DEVELOPMENT**

The School Committee will develop policies and put them in writing so that they may serve as guides for the discretionary action of those to whom it delegates authority.

The formulation and adoption of these written policies will constitute the basic method by which the School Committee will exercise its leadership in providing for the successful and efficient functioning of the school system. Through the study and evaluation of reports concerning the execution of its policies, the School Committee will exercise its control over school operation.

The School Committee accepts the definition of policy set forth by the National School Boards Association:

Policies are principles adopted by a School Committee to chart a course of action. They tell what is wanted; they may include why and how much. Policies should be broad enough to indicate a line of action to be followed by the administration in meeting day-to-day problems, yet be specific enough to give clear guidance.

The policies of the School Committee are framed, and are meant to be interpreted, in terms of state law, regulations of the Massachusetts Board of Education, and other regulatory agencies of the various levels of government.

Adopted by the Reading School Committee on March 26, 2007

## **POLICY ADOPTION**

Adoption of new policies or changing existing policies is solely the responsibility of the School Committee. Policies will be adopted and/or amended only by the affirmative vote of a majority of the members of the School Committee when such action has been scheduled on the agenda of a regular or special meeting.

To permit time for study of all policies or amendments to policies and to provide an opportunity for interested parties to react, proposed policies or amendments will be presented as an agenda item to the Committee in the following sequence:

1. First reading of proposed policy or policies; response from Superintendent; report from any advisory Committee assigned responsibility in the area; Committee discussion and directions for any redrafting
3. Second reading and discussion followed by adoption or rejection.

Amendments to the policy at the second reading stage will not require repetition of the sequence, unless the Committee so directs.

The School Committee may dispense with the above sequence to meet emergency conditions.

Policies will be effective upon the date set by the School Committee. This date will ensure that affected persons have an opportunity to become familiar with the requirements of the new policy prior to its implementation.

Any of the policies, Rules or Regulations may be amended by a majority vote of the members provided that at least one week's notice of such proposed action shall have been given at a previous meeting and entry thereof made in the records.

Adopted by the Reading School Committee on March 26, 2007

## **SCHOOL COMMITTEE REVIEW OF REGULATIONS**

It is expected that the Superintendent and administrative staff will need to issue regulations implementing policies of the School Committee. Many of these will be routine from year to year; others will arise in special circumstances; some will be drawn up under specific directions from the Committee.

The Committee may review the regulations developed by the Superintendent for the school system whenever they appear inconsistent with policy, goals, or objectives of the district, but it will revise or veto such regulations only when, in the Committee's judgment, they are inconsistent with policies adopted by the Committee.

The Committee will not officially approve regulations except as required by state law or in cases when strong community attitudes, or possible student or staff reaction, make it necessary or advisable for a regulation to have the Committee's advance approval.

### Rules Pertaining to Staff and Student Conduct

Under Massachusetts law, the Superintendent is required to publish "rules and regulations pertaining to the conduct of teachers and students which have been adopted." Codes of discipline, as well as procedures used to develop such codes shall be filed with the Department of Education for information purposes only. Standards of conduct will be included in High School staff and student handbooks. These handbooks will be reviewed and approved, upon any change, by the School Committee.

Adopted by the Reading School Committee on March 26, 2007

LEGAL REF.: M.G.L. 71:37H

## **POLICY DISSEMINATION**

The Superintendent is directed to establish and maintain an orderly plan for preserving and making accessible the policies adopted by the Committee and the regulations needed to put them into effect.

Accessibility is to extend at least to all employees of the school system, to members of the Committee, and, insofar as conveniently possible, to all persons in the community. A policy concerning a particular group or groups in the schools will be distributed to those groups prior to the policy's effective date.

All policy manuals distributed to anyone will remain the property of the Committee and will be considered as "on loan" to anyone, or any organization, in whose possession they might be at any time. They are subject to recall at any time deemed necessary for purposes of updating.

The School Committee's policy manual will be considered a public record and will be available for inspection at the Superintendent's office.

Adopted by the Reading School Committee on March 26, 2007

## **SUSPENSION OF POLICIES**

The operation of any section or sections of School Committee policies not established by law or contract may be temporarily suspended by a majority vote of Committee at any regular or special meeting. Any action to suspend policy must be reviewed at the next scheduled meeting and will be so noted on the agenda for that meeting.

Adopted by the Reading School Committee on March 26, 2007



## **USE OF ELECTRONIC MESSAGING BY SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

As elected public officials, School Committee members shall exercise caution when communicating between and among themselves via electronic messaging services including but not limited to electronic mail (e-mail), internet web forums, and internet chat rooms.

Under the Open Meeting Law, deliberation by a quorum of members constitutes a meeting. Deliberation is defined as movement toward a decision including but not limited to the sharing of an opinion regarding business over which the Committee has supervision, control, or jurisdiction. A quorum may be arrived at sequentially using electronic messaging without knowledge and intent by the author.

School Committee members should use electronic messaging between and among members only for housekeeping purposes such as requesting or communicating agenda items, meeting times, or meeting dates. Electronic messaging should not be used to discuss Committee matters that require public discussion under the Open Meeting Law.

Under the Public Records Law electronic messages between public officials may be considered public records. Therefore, in order to ensure compliance, the Superintendent of Schools or his/her designee shall be copied on all electronic correspondence between and among members of the School Committee. These copies shall be printed and retained in the central office in the same fashion as any other School Committee records. School Committee members who do not have a computer or access to these messages shall be provided copies on a timely basis.

Adopted by the Reading School Committee on March 26, 2007

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L 4:7; 39:23A, 23B; 66:10

## **NEW SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBER ORIENTATION**

In accordance with the requirements of Massachusetts General Law Chapter 71, Section 36A each new School Committee member elected to the Reading School Committee is required to complete, within 1 year of their election or appointment, at least 8 hours of orientation training. This orientation shall include, but is not limited to, a review of School Finance, the Open Meeting Law, Public Records Law, Conflict of Interest Law, Special Education Law, Collective Bargaining, School Leadership Standards and Evaluations, and the Roles and Responsibilities of School Committee Members.

The School Committee Chair and the Superintendent shall assist each new member to understand the policies and procedures of the Committee as soon after election as possible. Each new member shall be given the following materials:

- A. A copy of the School Committee policy manual
- B. A copy of the Open Meeting Law
- C. A copy of the Conflict of Interest Regulations
- D. A copy of the district's budget
- E. Collective bargaining agreements and contracts
- F. Student and/or staff handbooks

Each new member shall also receive any other materials the Chair and/or the Superintendent determines to be necessary.

The Chair and/or Superintendent shall also clarify policy:

- A. arranging visits to schools or administrative offices
- B. requesting information regarding school district operations
- C. responding to community requests/complaints concerning staff or programs
- D. handling confidential information

Whether appointed or elected, new members should be advised that they are also members of the Massachusetts Association of School Committees, Inc. and should be encouraged to utilize the services and resources MASC provide by attending meetings or workshops specifically designed for new Committee members. Their expenses at these meetings or workshops will be reimbursed in accordance with established Committee policy.

Adopted by the Reading School Committee on March 26, 2007

## **SCHOOL COMMITTEE CONFERENCES, CONVENTIONS, AND WORKSHOPS**

To provide continuing in-service training and development for its members, the School Committee encourages the participation of all members at appropriate School Committee conferences, workshops and conventions. However, in order to control both the investment of time and funds necessary to implement this policy, the School Committee establishes these principles and procedures for its guidance:

1. A calendar of School Committee conferences, conventions and workshops will be maintained by the School Committee secretary. The School Committee will periodically decide which meetings appear to be most promising in terms of producing direct and indirect benefits to the school system. At least annually, the School Committee will identify those new ideas or procedures and/or cost benefits that can be ascribed to participation at such meetings.
2. Funds for participation at such meetings will be budgeted for on an annual basis. When funds are limited, the School Committee will designate which of its members would be the most appropriate to participate at a given meeting.
3. Reimbursement to committee members for their travel expenses will accord with the travel expense policy for staff members.
4. When a conference, convention, or workshop is not attended by the full School Committee, those who do participate may be requested to share information, recommendations and materials acquired at the meeting.

Adopted by the Reading School Committee on March 26, 2007

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. 40:S

## **SCHOOL COMMITTEE LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM**

The School Committee, as an agent of the state, must operate within the bounds of state and federal laws affecting public education. If the committee is to meet its responsibilities to the residents and students of this community, it must work vigorously for the passage of new laws designed to advance the cause of good schools and for the repeal or modification of existing laws that impede this cause.

To this end:

1. The Committee will keep itself informed of pending legislation and actively communicate its concerns and make its position known to elected representatives at both the state and national level.
2. The Committee will work with its legislative representatives (both state and federal), with the Massachusetts Association of School Committees, and other concerned groups in developing an annual, as well as a long-range, legislative program. One of the major objectives of the Committee's legislative program will be to seek full funding for all state and federally mandated programs.
3. The Committee will usually designate a person who may or may not be a member of the Committee, to serve as its legislative representative. This person will be authorized to speak on the Committee's behalf with respect to legislation being considered by the Massachusetts Legislature or the United States Congress or their respective committees. In all dealings with individual elected representatives, the Legislature or Congress, the Committee's representative will be bound by the official positions taken by the School Committee.

Adopted by the Reading School Committee on March 26, 2007

## **SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIPS**

The Committee may maintain memberships in the national, state and regional School Committees (boards) associations and take an active part in the activities of these groups.

It may also maintain institutional memberships in other educational organizations, which the executive officer and Committee find to be of benefit to members and personnel.

The materials and benefits of institutional memberships will be distributed and used to the best advantage of the Committee and the staff.

Adopted by the Reading School Committee on March 26, 2007