

POLICY / COMMUNITY AFFAIRS SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING

AUGUST 4, 2008

Oliver Administration Building

Present

Subcommittee: Marjorie McBride, Chair, Diana Campbell, Karen Lynch and John Saviano

School Committee and Administration: William O'Dell, Melinda Thies, Jane Correia and Leslie Anderson

Marjorie McBride called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM.

Approval of Minutes

MOTION: Karen Lynch motioned to approve the minutes to the July 7, 2008 meeting; Diana Campbell seconded; the motion passed by a vote of 4 to 0.

Special Education Staffing Policy

Leslie Anderson reviewed for the Committee the new RIDE regulations for special education staffing; caps on student numbers have been removed; Districts are to use their good judgment to provide programs that are prudent and equitable. The threat of law suits will assure adherence; even with recent staffing cuts our

teacher to student numbers will remain at the former caps anyway. Our program must be reviewed annually, most likely during budget building time, for submission with the CRP. We have approximately 500 special education students, down from 1100 during years past. Approximately 50 of these are out-placed, of which 10 are at Meeting Street and 8 are under DCYF and out of our control. Jane Correia will prepare an updated report on SPED placements. There are very few true intensive support classrooms, most students are integrated into regular classrooms for some part of the day. Although the numbers are down from former years, the level of need is much greater. Because of the exorbitant cost of out-placing students, we need to look toward self-sustainability over time.

Regulations require public input to the policy development. Although the reputation of the Special Education Advisory Committee has deteriorated, this venue provides a vehicle for parents to interact and needs to be resurrected; Leslie Anderson has been in contact with the Chair and the first meeting is planned for October. With proper and sufficient notification of this meeting, it was felt that SEAC input would satisfy regulations. The draft policy can be placed on our website and presented for a first reading to the School Committee at their September 22 meeting; the second reading will be October 27; Marjorie McBride will request that the Chair allow public discussion on this during the meetings. John Saviano has concerns about the seriousness of this movement and since the School Committee is the final governing body, they must take into consideration the needs of

the families.

Leslie Anderson left the meeting at 6:58 PM.

Entrance Age Policy JEB

The Superintendent requested the removal of the sentence “Students born in the month of September will be screened upon request.” First reading will be in August.

Procurement and Bidding Policies

The Committee reviewed Jane Correia’s recommendation on changes to Policy DJC Bidding Requirements – no issues. Discussed in detail were the recommended changes to Policy DJ Procurement Policy; concerns were, conflicts with other School Committee policies, encumbering administration yet upholding Committee responsibility to oversee major expenditures. It was finally agreed that the phrase in item II.A. “maintenance contracts covering specific units or group of equipment” should be moved to a third paragraph in section I and followed by “may be waived by the Superintendent upon the approval of the Budget/ Facilities Subcommittee.” Administrators will further discuss this policy, keeping in mind the Committee’s concerns, and report back to the Subcommittee at the September meeting.

Subcommittees of the School Committee Policy BCE-R

Since the Policy Subcommittee is, in fact, responsible to review administration recommendations for technology, it was agreed the current policy will be enforced and the Director of Technology will report to this Subcommittee regularly.

Bill O'Dell left the meeting at 7:40 PM.

Procedures for Parents of Children with Health Issues

Melinda Thies, after consultation with Attorney Henneous, further refined the guidelines for “Medically Fragile Students”. The Committee discussed adding photos to the school lists and requiring a meeting with parents, the principal and the nurse. It was agreed that procedures should not be “too tight” and the following phrases should be added:

- at the elementary level -- “Parents are encouraged to attach a picture.”**
- at all levels – “Parents have the option to request a meeting with the principal and the school nurse to discuss their student’s needs.”**

These procedures will be an addendum to the student handbooks with parental sign-off. They will also become a new School Committee policy to go for a first reading in August. Marjorie McBride will look up the letter coding. Melinda Thies also mentioned

that the induction process for substitutes has been redesigned.

Next Meeting

September 2, 2008, 6:00 PM at Oliver

Adjournment

At 7:56 PM, Diana Campbell motioned to adjourn; Karen Lynch seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

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