

POLICY / COMMUNITY AFFAIRS SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING

FEBRUARY 1, 2010

Oliver Administration Building

Present

Subcommittee: Diana Campbell, Chair, Denise Arsenault and John Bento

School Committee and Administration: Marjorie McBride (6:20 PM), William O'Dell (6:30 PM), John Saviano, Paul Silva (6:20 PM), Melinda Thies, Mario Andrade and Mary Almeida

Diana Campbell called the meeting to order at 6:08 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag

All present were invited to join in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Approval of Minutes

MOTION: Denise Arsenault motioned to approve the minutes to the January 4, 2010 meeting; John Bento seconded. The motion to approve passed by a vote of 3 to 0.

Attendance Policies

Denise has not researched this yet.

MOTION: Denise Arsenault motioned to continue to the next meeting. John Bento seconded. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

Sexual Harassment

Diana explained this was put on the agenda at the request of a School Committee member because a title could follow a person for a very long time and could haunt them in ten to fifteen years or if the person should want to enter the military. Our harassment policy (JGF) refers to harassment only. Diana had asked our solicitor to research the issue. In response, Katherine McAllister wrote, "While I believe that under the adopted policy, the School Department retains the authority to discipline as it deems appropriate under the circumstances of each case, I have reservations in recommending that it be done due to the intent of the governing law and the School Committee policy."

Diana agrees the determination needs to be in the eyes of the victim. Melinda Thies feels further clarification from the attorney is needed. John Saviano commented it sounds like the request is to "dumb down" the regulation by taking the word sexual out; if we did this, we would not have the same continuity with other districts in the state; perhaps we should recognize degrees of harassment. Denise Arsenault contended that sexual harassment is against the law.

Paul Silva and Marjorie McBride arrived at 6:20 PM.

John Saviano feels that when an allegation is made, the administrators investigate and make an experienced and educated decision. Melinda said we have had complaints from adults, student to student, and student to adult—there are gradations; it is the responsibility of the administrator to conduct an investigation. Marjorie McBride commented that you cannot legislate common sense, we rely on our administrators for that; sexual harassment should be the court of last resort. Melinda said sexual harassment is clearly articulated in the Mt. Hope handbook. Denise requested that Andrew Henneous be present at the next meeting to clarify the issues; she feels the law takes care of the perpetrator; if the record is expunged, the person does not have to tell. Paul Silva clarified the person's court record will get expunged but the arrest record will not.

Bill O'Dell arrived at 6:30 PM

MOTION: Denise Arsenault motioned to continue this discussion to the next meeting; John Bento seconded. The motion passed by a vote of 3 to 0. John Bento recommended scheduling a short Policy meeting just before a meeting that Andrew is scheduled to attend.

Policy Review List

Chemical Health Policy: Diana said we wanted over-arching input; she will contact Maria Ursini of the Substance Abuse Prevention Task

Force to participate in discussion at the March meeting.

Superintendent's Continuous Improvement Plan: John Bento to work with SC Chair to set up special workshop

HIV/ Sexuality: Mario Andrade to review for compliance with RIDE updates

Attendance Policies: Denise Arsenault to review policy book for adequate coverage

Sexual Harassment: Discussion continued to March meeting

Next Meeting

March 1, 2010; 6:30 PM

Adjournment

MOTION: At 6:35 PM Denise Arsenault motioned to adjourn; John Bento seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

/ca