

POLICY / COMMUNITY AFFAIRS SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING

Monday, March 4, 2013

Oliver Administration Building

Present

Subcommittee: William O'Dell, Chair, Diana Campbell and Lynn Wainwright

School Committee, Administration & Guests: Melinda Thies and Kathy Ruginis (6:50 p.m.)

Meeting called to order by William O. at 6:37 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

MOTION: Diana C. motioned to approve the minutes of the February 4, 2013 meeting; Lynn W. seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Dating Violence Policy (JGF) Discussion

Melinda T. began the discussion by saying that in 2008, a dating violence policy was promulgated as a way to monitor issues and to instruct students on how to identify the signs of dating violence. In the past, dating violence was usually handled more discreetly through guidance, social worker, etc. Melinda T. worked with the middle school and high school on a task force to put together a

dating violence policy. Melinda T. met with staff to discuss the warning signs of dating violence and how to offer support. Those points discussed were included within policy JGF “Prohibition against Harassment, Bullying and Dating Violence. The Department of Education had developed a model policy for bullying and harassment which does not include any reference to dating violence as they now want Dating Violence to be a standalone policy. Bristol Warren recently adopted (JFCK) “Rhode Island Statewide Bullying Policy”. As a result, the district will need to put together a Dating Violence Policy. Melinda extracted the wording from policy JGF “Prohibition against Harassment, Bullying and Dating Violence to create a new document.

The Policy Subcommittee was in agreement that once the new dating policy was adopted, it would replace the existing JGF policy as there is now a separate policy for bullying and harassment and will be a separate policy for dating violence. Melinda T. expressed a concern about how much we include in the dating policy in the interest of discretion. Diana C. would like to see the current points of the dating violence policy wording that was extracted come under headers.

(Kathy Ruginis arrived at 6:50 p.m.)

Bill O. brought up a concern about the need to have retaliation addressed within the policy. Melinda T. responded that this is

addressed in #15 of the draft Dating Violence Policy.

After some discussion, it was agreed by the subcommittee that the Dating Violence Policy document presented this evening is still a little too rough for a first reading. Melinda T. will finish point #20 and will send updated document electronically to Policy Subcommittee members. Melinda T. said that the dating policy draft absolutely mirrors policy JGF's wording for dating violence which has already been approved by the school committee.

Diana C. further commented that whenever anything serious happens, such as dating violence, the school committee should be notified. Lynn W. suggested having posters with information about the signs of dating violence posted in the gym locker rooms.

MOTION: Diana C. motioned that the Dating Violence Policy (JGF) discussion be continued next month; Lynn W. seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

**Tobacco, Alcohol & Other Drug Policy (JFCH; also JFCG) Discussion
Bill O. stated that he read through the policy and didn't have a problem with it. Lynn W. had a question about #5 on the first page asking how we involve the total community in confronting the problem. Diana C. gave some history behind the rationale for including that item stating that the conversation began due to how a child was disciplined in a past situation. The question was raised of**

who would be determining if a child was impaired and would it be done by a school nurse or principal. In that particular case, the student was a good student so by focusing on just discipline, it did not give flexibility with dealing with those kinds of situations. There was a previous school committee member who wanted to focus on education and positive supports which is why #5 states “involve the total community in confronting the problem”. Melinda T. added that the overall policy initially focused on discipline and so the previous subcommittee started looking at the policy differently such as looking into substance abuse counselor, etc. Bill O. responded that he felt we would have to be careful how much we are including in this policy and whether we can enforce it. Melinda T. added that is why #5 was brief in its wording.

Melinda T. said that in the past, another student issue came up which pointed out the inconsistencies in the policy with the number of offenses per different violations, ie., alcohol, controlled substance, and ultimately caused a problem when trying to apply it to that case. Melinda T. also stated that they had put into the policy an intervention requiring community service, but the Department of Education would not support that and it had to be stricken from the document. In response to that, Bill O. asked whether offering choices to a student who was in violation where they be given the options of service vs. detention. Melinda T. said if we craft the language carefully, that could work.

Bill O. would like to see the language for offenses aligned. Diana C. said that it could state, “2nd offense and subsequent offenses”. Lynn W. asked if the district tracks offenses. Melinda T. said that yes they do and the school committee receives those reports. Lynn W. asked how many smoking offenses there are. Melinda T. said they have reduced over the years. However, pot smoking has increased. (To combat this, an exterior camera has been placed in the area where the violations would take place in an effort to deter this behavior.) Melinda T. stated that the consequence for pot smoking is suspension up to ten days.

Diana C. referred to comments made by another school committee member at a previous meeting that they were concerned if you don’t have specific guidelines, some kids may get away with violations. The policy should be an objective guide for discipline and to help parents see what is expected.

It was determined by the subcommittee that although we do not currently use a breathalyzer, JFCH-R Breathalyzer Policy should be left in as it provides flexibility.

In summary, Bill O. said that he feels just a couple of tweaks need to be made to the policy. Melinda T. would like to see the offense language aligned as well as the addition of more therapeutic references. Melinda T. said that the high school had provided input, but those items had not been addressed yet within the policy.

Melinda T. will supply the input for the subcommittee electronically.

MOTION: Diana C. made a motion that at our next meeting the subcommittee review the TAOD Policy (JFCH) more thoroughly and to reference input from Melinda T.; seconded by Lynn W. The motion passed unanimously.

Chemical Health Policy

Diana C. stated that this policy was initially suggested by a previous school committee member who is no long part of the group. It was initially written as a more therapeutic approach. Bill O. commented that this policy as it is written falls under the umbrella of what Andrew H. would advise us against as it could cause civil liberty issues and that there would definitely be a chance for inaccuracies concerning those “offenses” off campus.

MOTION: Diana C. made a motion to abandon the Chemical Health Policy because we already have a Tobacco, Alcohol & Other Drug Policy; Lynn W. seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Policy Queue Review

Lynn W. reported concerning the Health & Wellness Policy that she attended the first forum of the Wellness Collaborative. She reminded

everyone that RIDE is providing guidelines and not restrictions.

MOTION: Diana C. made a motion that the Chemical Health Policy be removed from the Policy Review List as it is not necessary since we already have the TAOD Policy; Lynn W. seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Diana C. commented that the Code of Conduct Policy was originally intended to be included in tandem with the Chemical Health Policy. Melinda T. stated that the school committee member who previously introduced this wanted to focus on positives rather than punitive.

MOTION: Diana C. made a motion that the Code of Conduct Policy be removed from the Policy Review List as it is not a necessary policy as the concepts are already included in other policies.

Diana C. asked the status of the Compulsory Attendance Policy. Melinda T. responded that RIDE changed the compulsory attendance age to 18. The policy would include kinds of supports on how to continue education (not necessarily traditional school). Melinda T. said they are waiting to hear from RIDE.

MOTION: Diana C. made a motion to remove Superintendent's Evaluation and RIASC Sample Superintendent Evaluation from the Policy Review List; Lynn W. seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

The subcommittee agreed to continue looking at the KMS and MHS Student Handbook. The School Committee secretary was asked to provide KMS and MHS handbooks for the subcommittee members at the next school committee meeting.

The next agenda will reflect above to include the Dating Violence Policy, Tobacco, Alcohol & Other Drug Policy as well as the Policy Review List. Diana C. requested that the Handbooks be included on the agenda as the last item if there is time to discuss it.

Adjournment

MOTION: At 7:47 pm Diana C. motioned to adjourn; Lynn W. seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

/kd