

POLICY / COMMUNITY AFFAIRS SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING

Monday, April 1, 2013

Oliver Administration Building

Present

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

School Committee, Administration & Guests: Melinda Thies and Mario Andrade

Meeting called to order by William O. at 6:33 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

MOTION: Diana C. motioned to approve the minutes of the March 4, 2013 meeting; Lynn W. seconded.

DISCUSSION: Diana C. stated that a typographical error needed to be corrected on page 3.

The motion passed unanimously.

Dating Violence Policy (JGF) Discussion

The amended copy of the Dating Violence Policy document was reviewed by all present. Melinda T. stated that the formatting she used for the new Dating Violence Policy was the same used in policy

JGF - Prohibition Against Harassment, Bullying and Dating Violence. The amended copy of the document now includes “#20 Reports”. Diana C. asked where #21 and #22 were. Melinda T. responded that those items did not relate to dating violence. William O. asked if Andrew has looked at this document. Melinda T. responded that he had reviewed it when it was originally part of the Prohibition Against Harassment, Bullying and Dating Violence. Melinda T. added that the new policy just extracted the old wording from the original JGF policy.

William O. said he had a concern about the third bullet under “#2 Policy Purpose” where it states “Prevent new incidents of teen dating violence and sexual violence.” He feels the use of the word “prevent” could cause future legal problems if a person were victimized where they could say, “the school did not prevent it”. Diana C. said that the ultimate purpose of the policy is to raise school awareness and provide direction and responsibility. Diana C. added that she agrees that the word “prevent” would not be good to use. After some discussion on what words might better serve, all agreed that “discourage” should replace “prevent” in the wording. Lynn W. asked who is responsible for raising dating violence awareness once policy is approved. Melinda T. responded it would be the school’s responsibility.

Lynn W. pointed out a typographical error under item #8 Victim Rights and Protection where “t” needs to be changed to “to”.

In reference to “#20 Reports”, Lynn W. asked if there should be a designated month to report incidents of dating violence. Melinda T. responded it would be difficult to lock into a specific month and it is best to continue with the semi-annual reporting which follows what all schools in the state are required to do.

William O. stated that he liked how the content of “#15 Help for the Victim or Those Reporting Dating Violence or Sexual Violence” is phrased.

Lynn W. wondered about “#10 Responsibility of Students” where students might be intimidated to “tell on someone”. Melinda T. responded that this is why it is worded “may result in disciplinary action”. Melinda T. added this is more to encourage good samaritan behavior and to care for one another.

It was felt by all present that the document as presented is ready to go for a first reading. Diana C. asked the secretary to assign an appropriate number and to confirm whether the separate bullying policy has been adopted so that the Prohibition of Harassment, Bullying and Dating Violence policy can be removed once the Dating Violence Policy is added thereby having a separate policy for each.

MOTION: Diana C. made a motion that the Dating Violence Policy be presented for a first reading to the full School Committee at the next

business meeting on April 22nd; seconded by Lynn W. The motion passed unanimously.

Tobacco, Alcohol & Other Drug Policy (JFCH; also JFCG) Discussion
William O. asked why the policy reference shows two places, ie. JFCH and JFCG. Diana C. wondered if that was related to when the policies were first being drafted when there was a more therapeutic policy along with the policy before us. Melinda T. checked on the district website and JFCG no longer appears there.

Melinda T. went over the changes that are shown on the current document that resulted from her meeting with the district administrators and high school. Diana C. asked about third and subsequent offenses. Melinda T. responded that for some situations that would be appropriate, but for other situations listing a third or subsequent offense would not be appropriate. Lynn W. commented that she felt three days out of school for smoking was too stringent. Diana C. agreed that to go from four hours to three days is a bit of a leap. Melinda T. responded that the principals recommended this. Lynn W. asked about reporting of infractions from year to year. Melinda T. said that there is reporting and it will list the type of infraction and number of incidents. Diana C. commented that under the alcohol category third offense it mentions suspension up to 10 days. Melinda T. responded that the superintendent could recommend after third offense to be suspended up to 180 days. Melinda T. added that we need to be careful not to send the message

that this behavior could continue after a third offense. Diana C. stated that we would not include subsequent in alcohol wording. William O. asked who the Student Assistance Counselor is and Melinda T. responded that it is Arlene McCauley whose office is located at the high school. Diana C. commented that under the section on possession there is no third offense listed, only second offense and then suspension out of school. Diana C. feels that Andrew should review definitions of controlled substances citing that item “**” and item “***” are very similar. Diana C. suggested that the “***” item should be kept, but reiterated that Andrew should take a look at. It was suggested to have Andrew review when he is present at the next business meeting.

Diana C. remarked that on page 4. Section III under second offense letter C one-hundred eight days needs to include a hyphen between one and hundred. Lynn W. commented that throughout the document there needs to be consistency in capitalization with titles, etc.

William O. requested that the secretary verify the appropriate policy reference number.

MOTION: Diana C. made a motion to present to the full school committee at the next appropriate meeting the policy on Tobacco, Alcohol and Other Drug (TAOD) for a first reading; seconded by Lynn W. The motion passed unanimously.

Policy Review List

Diana C. highlighted the following items on the Policy Review List. She stated that the Health and Wellness Policy still needs to be completed, the Dating Violence Policy will go for a first reading to the full school committee, the Tobacco, Alcohol and Other Drugs Policy will go to the full school committee for a first reading, and we are still waiting to hear from RIDE about the Compulsory Attendance Policy. Diana C. also suggested running the policy review list by Andrew.

Student Handbook Discussion

William O. asked what sorts of issues and problems are we looking for. Lynn W. responded that she believes the handbook needs to be enforced. William O. commented if that was the only reason to look at the student handbook, there would be no purpose for the Policy Subcommittee as they are not in charge of enforcing. Melinda T. stated that once the revisions to the TAOD policy are approved, an addendum will be added to the student handbook. Diana C. stated she would like a copy made available to the subcommittee of what policies are going to be submitted for print in the handbook prior to distribution for inclusion in handbook which should include Tobacco, Alcohol and Other Drug Policy, Dating Violence Policy and Bullying Policy. Diana C. said that she is concerned as some things in the past have gone into the handbook that did not match the policy. Melinda T. cautioned that if the first reading for the Dating Violence Policy as well as the Tobacco, Alcohol and Other Drug Policy is in

April, the second reading wouldn't be until the end of May and the Handbook goes to print at the beginning of June.

Melinda T. stated that she will follow-up with SIT about cheating policy for student handbook. She asked if it would be acceptable to the school committee to have the high school come up with sample language for the handbook. They responded that it would be fine.

Future Agenda Items

William O. reminded everyone that it is not necessary to meet every month if there is no business to discuss.

Melinda T. brought up policy JEB which was adopted in 1994 and revised in 2008 and asked if the subcommittee would be willing to review at a future meeting explaining that some issues related to it came to her attention recently with the enrollment of kindergarten students. She stated there seems to be some discrepancy within the policy related to the age of enrollment for kindergarten students and for first grade students which contradicts Rhode Island General Law.

Diana C. stated that the superintendent has the authority to edit and/or re-number a current policy and that edited version can then be presented to the school committee. William O. added that the school committee could then decide to push it back to the Policy Subcommittee. William O. also suggested that Melinda T. work on the wording with Andrew. He then said that Melinda T. could make a superintendent's recommendation to the school committee on policy

JEB mentioning editing due to contradiction in terms.

Diana C. said that recently she came across some old policies related to the roles and duties of the school committee which have fallen by the wayside. Diana C suggested looking at policy BBA School Committee Powers and Duties as well as the “Issues to Consider” document for a future meeting to see whether we should reinforce items mentioned within. Lynn W. asked what would happen if a policy is violated by a school committee member. Diana C. said that a sanction would come from the voter.

Melinda T. stated there is a policy related to school committee communications as well that she would like to see added to a future agenda.

Adjournment

MOTION: At 7:43 pm Diana C. motioned to adjourn; Lynn W. seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

/kd