

**DEDHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS
School Committee Meeting Retreat
August 2, 2023**

MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE:

Victor Hebert
Stephen Acosta
Mayanne Briggs
Dr. Leah Flynn Gallant
Cailen McCormick
Christopher Polito
Laurie Twomey

MEMBERS OF THE ADMINISTRATION:

Nan Murphy, Superintendent
Dr. Ian Kelly, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
Matthew Wells, Assistant Superintendent of Business and Finance
Dr. Sara Stetson, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services

MEMBER FROM MASC

Jim Hardy, Deputy Director MASC

Chair Victor Hebert called the School Committee meeting to order.

AGENDA:

Donations

Mr. Wells announced that the Dedham Public Schools Performing Arts Company donated \$2250 for fine arts programming.

Motion was made to approve the donation. School Committee members voted 7-0 to approve this donation.

Mr. Wells announced that “Music Drives Us” donated \$2500 to support music in the Dedham Public Schools.

Motion was made to approve the donation. School Committee members voted 7-0 to approve this donation.

Mr. Hebert introduced the new School Committee member, Laurie Twomey.

Review and Approval Vote of Previous Meeting Minutes

Motion was made to table the approval of the June 21, 2023 and July 17, 2023 meeting minutes to the August 22, 2023 School Committee meeting. Motion was approved by a vote of 7-0.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE RETREAT

• Facilitator from the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) - overview of best practices with roles and responsibilities of the Committee

Jim Hardy, Deputy Director MASC gave a summary of his career experience. He said he has been with MASC for over 20 years. His main responsibility at MASC is in training and policy/procedures. He feels that his previous experience as a school committee member provides him insight into his job at MASC. Members of the School Committee and DPS Administration introduced themselves and gave a brief summary of their experience and years served on the School Committee.

Mr. Hardy presented slides that summarized research done by MASC related to successful School Committee practices.

Effective School Committee practices

An effective School Committee includes the following:

- Strong vision and mission statement
- Data that provide accountability for outcome driven results
- Relationships developed with the core values of respect and trust.
- Static roles and responsibilities that stay in place for at least 5 years to generate stability and success.
- Effective meetings are created by effective and well-thought out agendas
- #1 focus on student achievement
- Emphasis on teamwork and self governance
- Availability of Professional Development for School Committee members.

Roles of School Committee

A successful School Committee should:

- Focus on results-driven goals
- Not overlap with the School Administration roles
- Focus on “What, Why and How”
- Provide a bridge between the community and Superintendent
- Build on trust and respect between the Superintendent and School Committee members
- School Committee members with children in the district should be make sure they separate their School Committee and parental roles
- Utilize the experience and strengths of each member
- Align goals with District plans.

Policy and Procedures

- Delineate Superintendent and School Committee responsibilities.
- Update policy frequently by measuring through the lens of student improvement.
- Two-year goals are sometimes more viable than one-year goals.
- Policy and Procedures can sometimes overlap.
- Changes in Conduct need to be approved by the School Committee.
- Only the School Committee can change policy.

Main responsibilities of School Committee:

- Employs Superintendent.
- Hires and retains District legal counsel.
- Responsible for the Collective bargaining process.
- Supervises Principals, provides management to the schools and implements policy.

Training and communication

- School Committee members are responsible for training new members.
- Members need to be aware that they are always wearing the “hat” of their role.
- Chair needs to possess communication skills and knowledge of legal obligations.
- Clear communication rules should be in place for emails and social media.
- Any text or email communication can trigger a public records request.

Meeting agendas

- Use a year-long agenda template for planning purposes that includes recurring events.
- Staff should be given a time limit and specific requirements for their updates.
- There should be communication with the Superintendent and Chair before each meeting.
- Additional information not included in the agenda can be provided in Superintendent Updates.
- Backup documentation should be available in advance of the meeting.
- Agenda does not have to be rigid.
- Agendas can be grouped into routine categories.
- Target length of meetings.
- Try to limit redundancy of comments within the school committee members.

Meeting conduct

- Remote meetings present new challenges to public comment.
- Remote meetings last longer.
- Policy should be created about acceptable behavior and communication between meetings.
- Limits on power should be clearly defined.
- Chair should not be an ex-officio member of any subcommittee.
- Superintendent must ensure that School Committee members are updated on all the information they need to know to do their jobs successfully.

- Social media group activity needs to be controlled by specific rules. Be careful not to discuss any issues publicly before a vote has been taken.
- The Ethics Commission can issue severe punishment for violation of Open Meeting Law.

Communication Profile Grid

Mr. Hardy conducted an exercise with the School Committee using a tool that registered perceived roles in common situations. Mr. Hardy explained that Administration and School Committee roles should be portrayed differently in this exercise. He instructed the members to go with their first inclination on the answers. The grid measured responses on four axes: Assertive vs. Cooperative and People vs. Task.

The group discussed the outcomes of the survey and how their answers reflect their personality and leadership style.

Mr. Hardy announced he would share all the slides used for the presentation tonight.

Comments and Discussion

A question was asked about how to balance roles as School Committee member and citizen. Mr. Hardy replied that when School Committee members serve on PTO or as coach or volunteer, members must always be cognizant of their School Committee role.

School Committee members asked for more information about the Open Meeting Law. Mr. Hardy explained that the Open Meeting Law does not state that public comments are allowed, but the reality is you have to allow public comment. The key is to make sure to control it so that it doesn't result in disruption to the meeting. Rules about the meaning of disruption have to be put in place.

Mr. Hardy explained that a recent SJC decision stated that Committees have to create their own "reasonable" policy about public comment. If the policy states that a person has three minutes to comment then they have the right to utilize the whole time. He said that MASC will be producing a new template that incorporates the new decision changes. He also suggested that the Chair meet with the Chief of Police to find out if the Police Department is willing to respond to unruly public commentators. One way to control public comment is to ask that the public sign up ahead of time.

Motion was made to adjourn and approved with a unanimous roll call vote.