

EXECUTIVE SESSIONS

All meetings of the School Committee are open to attendance by the public and media representatives. However, the Committee has the right to convene in a closed executive session when it meets the following procedural conditions imposed by state law:

1. The Committee will first convene in an open session for which due notice has been given.
2. The chairman (or, in his/her absence, the presiding member) will state the purpose for the executive session.
3. A majority of the members must vote to enter the executive session, with the vote taken by roll call and recorded in the official minutes.
4. The chairman or presiding member will state before entering the executive session whether the Committee will reconvene in open session after the executive session.

The law puts specific limitations on the purposes for which executive sessions may be convened. The Committee may enter executive sessions only to deliberate:

1. The reputation, character, physical condition or mental health, rather than the professional competence, of a single individual.
2. The discipline or dismissal, including the hearing of charges against, a member of the Committee, a school department employee, or other individual.
3. Strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation, if an open meeting might have a detrimental effect. Collective bargaining may also be conducted.
4. The deployment of security personnel or devices.
5. Allegations of criminal misconduct or to discuss the filing of criminal complaints.
6. Transactions of real estate, if an open meeting might be detrimental to the negotiating position of the Committee or another party.
7. To comply with the provisions of any general or specific law of federal grant-in-aid requirements.
8. And to consider and interview applicants for employment. This exemption only applies if it can be determined that an open meeting will have a detrimental affect in obtaining qualified applicants.
9. To meet or confer with a mediator with respect to any litigation or public business.

(In the first two cases listed, an open meeting will be held if the individual involved so requests.)

Accurate records of the proceedings will be kept and may remain secret only so long as their publication would defeat the purpose of the session. The Committee will review executive session minutes for possible declassification at least once each year.

All votes will be recorded roll-call votes, and will become part of the minutes of executive sessions. Provisional agreements reached in such sessions will not be binding without official action in public session.

Established by law and Committee policy

ADOPTED: OCTOBER, 2007

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. 39:23A; 39:23B

SOURCE: SOUTHBRIDGE

NOTIFICATION OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETINGS

As required by law, a minimum of 48 hours advance notice will be given for any meeting of the School Committee, including all subcommittee meetings. The only exception permitted is in case of emergency, which the law defines as "a sudden, generally unexpected occurrence or set of circumstances demanding immediate action."

Notification of the dates, times, and places of regular meetings will be accomplished by periodic publication of the schedule for the ensuing months. Notification of a change in a regular meeting time or place and notification of a special meeting will be filed with the town clerk at least 48 hours in advance, as required by law.

ADOPTED: OCTOBER, 2007

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. 39:23A; 39:23B

SOURCE: SOUTHBRIDGE

AGENDA FORMAT

The Superintendent, conferring with the chairman of the School Committee, will arrange the order of items on meetings agendas.

The Committee will follow the order of business established by the agenda except as it votes to rearrange the order for the convenience of visitors or individuals appearing before the Committee.

Items of business may be suggested by any individual. The inclusion of such items, however, will be at the discretion of the chairman of the Committee with the exception of a proposed agenda item requested by at least four committee members. A staff member who wishes to have a topic scheduled on the agenda should submit the request through the Superintendent.

The agenda will also provide for time when any citizen who may briefly speak before the School Committee.

The agenda, together with supporting materials, will be distributed to School Committee members at least three working days prior to the meeting to permit adequate time to prepare for the meeting.

Agendas will be posted and made available to the press.

Adopted: October, 2007

SOURCE: SOUTHBRIDGE

AGENDA FORMAT

At regular meetings, the following will be the customary order of business:

1. Pledge of Allegiance
2. Public Input
3. Meeting Called to Order
4. Roll Call
5. Approval of Minutes
6. Reports
7. Presentations
8. Report of the Superintendent
9. School Committee Actions
10. Unfinished Business
11. New Business
12. School Committee Reports
13. Executive Session
14. Open Session

ADOPTED: OCTOBER, 2007

SOURCE: SOUTHBRIDGE

QUORUM

A quorum shall consist of four members of the full Committee.

ADOPTED: OCTOBER, 2007

SOURCE: SOUTHBRIDGE

RULES OF ORDER

Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised will govern the proceedings of the Committee, except when those rules are in conflict with the Committee's approved policies and regulations.

In accordance with Robert's Rules, the Committee may suspend parliamentary rules of order by a two-thirds vote.

ADOPTED: OCTOBER, 2007

SOURCE: SOUTHBRIDGE

VOTING METHOD

Except on procedural matters, all votes of the School Committee will be taken by a call of the roll and the results will be recorded in the minutes. If the vote is unanimous, only that fact need be recorded.

All actions will require a majority vote of all members present and voting except as state law, Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised, or policies of this Committee require a larger majority. A majority of the members of the School Committee will constitute a quorum.

A two-thirds vote will be required to suspend parliamentary rules of order.

ADOPTED: OCTOBER, 2007

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. 39:23B; 71:42; 71:50

SOURCE: SOUTHBRIDGE

MINUTES

The secretary of the School Committee will be responsible for reporting in the minutes all actions taken by the Committee. The minutes are legal evidence of action taken.

Minutes will include:

1. A statement on the nature of the meeting (regular or special), the time, the place, and the approval of the last regular and each subsequent special meeting.
2. Names of the members present or absent, annotated as to arrival and departure times, if during the meeting.
3. A complete record of official actions taken by the Committee relative to the Superintendent's recommendations, to communications, and to all business transacted. Resolutions and motions will be given in their exact wording, accompanied by the names of members moving and seconding and a record of the results of the vote. Reports and documents relating to a formal motion may be omitted if they are referred to and identified by title and date.
4. Notation of formal adjournment.

Copies of the minutes will be sent to all Committee members at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting at which the minutes are to be approved.

The approved minutes will become permanent records of the Committee. Minutes of public meetings and minutes of executive sessions that have been declassified will be in the custody of the Superintendent who will make them available to interested citizens upon request.

ADOPTED: OCTOBER, 2007

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. 39:23B; 66:10

CROSS REF: KDB, Public's Right to Know

SOURCE: SOUTHBRIDGE

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETINGS

All regular and special meetings shall be open to the public. Executive sessions will be held only as prescribed by the Statutes of the Commonwealth.

The School Committee desires citizens of the district to attend its meetings so that they may become better acquainted with the operations and the programs of our local public schools. In addition, the Committee would like the opportunity to hear the wishes and ideas of the public.

1. At the start of each regularly scheduled School Committee meeting, individuals or group representatives will be invited to address the Committee. The length of the public participation segment shall be determined by the chairman.
2. Speakers will be allowed three (3) minutes to present their material. The presiding chairman may permit extension of this time limit.
3. At the discretion of the chair, topics for discussion may be limited to those items listed on the School Committee meeting agenda for that evening.
4. Improper conduct and remarks will not be allowed, and the chairman may terminate that individuals privilege of address.
5. All remarks will be addressed through the chairman of the meeting.
6. The Committee will not hear complaints about school personnel nor against any member of the school community in public session.

ADOPTED: OCTOBER, 2007

SOURCE: SOUTHBRIDGE

SPECIAL PROCEDURES FOR CONDUCTING HEARINGS

The School Committee will:

1. Give due and public notice in line with statutory requirements to publicize the meeting in all local media.
2. Make available printed information on the topic.
3. Give all an equal opportunity to be heard in accordance with the Committee's policy.

The chairman will preside at the hearing.

The public will be informed at the beginning of the hearing the particular procedure that will be followed in regard to questions, remarks, rebuttals, and any time limitations or other rules.

Statements and supporting information will be presented first by the Committee, or by others for the Committee; to comment, citizens must be recognized by the chair, and all remarks must be addressed to the chair and be germane to the topic. The chair will recognize persons who have not commented previously during the hearing before recognizing persons who wish to remark a second time.

ADOPTED: OCTOBER, 2007

SOURCE: SOUTHBRIDGE

SCHOOL COMMITTEE POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Policies are principles adopted by a School Committee to chart a course of action.

The Committee will develop policies and put them in writing.

The formulation and adoption of these written policies will constitute the basic method by which the School Committee will exercise its leadership in providing for the successful and efficient functioning of the school system.

The policies of the School Committee will conform to all applicable state and federal law.

ADOPTED: OCTOBER, 2007

SOURCE: SOUTHBRIDGE

POLICY ADOPTION

Adoption of new policies or changing existing policies is solely the responsibility of the School Committee. Policies will be adopted and/or amended only by the affirmative vote of a majority of the members of the School Committee when such action has been scheduled on the agenda of a regular or special meeting.

To permit time for study of all policies or amendments to policies and to provide an opportunity for interested parties to react, proposed policies or amendments will be presented as an agenda item over three meetings to the Committee in the following sequence:

1. Information item - distribution with agenda
2. Discussion item - first reading of proposed policy or policies; response from Superintendent; report from any advisory Committee assigned responsibility in the area; Committee discussion and directions for any redrafting
3. Action item - discussion, adoption or rejection.

Amendments to the policy at the action stage will not require repetition of the sequence, unless the Committee so directs.

The School Committee may dispense with the above sequence to meet emergency conditions.

Policies will be effective upon the date set by the School Committee. This date will ensure that affected persons have an opportunity to become familiar with the requirements of the new policy prior to its implementation.

ADOPTED: OCTOBER, 2007

SOURCE:MASC

NOTE: Except in an emergency situation, policies should not be adopted at the meeting at which they are initially introduced.

AUTHORITY

Consistent with Federal, State, or Local Law, the policies of the School Committee shall be the supreme authority of the school district and shall supersede any other authority.

Staff and student entities will comply with all federal, state and local laws as well as the policies of the School Committee.

ADOPTED: OCTOBER, 2007

SOURCE: SOUTHBRIDGE

POLICY REVISION AND REVIEW

The Committee will review its policies on a regular basis.

The Committee will evaluate how the policies have been executed by the school staff and will weigh the results. It will rely on the school staff, students, and the community for providing evidence of the effect of the policies it has adopted.

The Superintendent will inform the Committee of all policies that are out-of-date or need revision.

ADOPTED: OCTOBER, 2007

SOURCE: SOUTHBRIDGE

SCHOOL COMMITTEE REVIEW OF REGULATIONS

The Superintendent and administrative staff will issue regulations implementing policies of the School Committee.

The Committee may review the regulations developed by the Superintendent for the school system whenever they appear inconsistent with policy, goals, or objectives of the district, but it will revise or veto such regulations only when, in the Committee's judgment, they are inconsistent with policies adopted by the Committee.

The Committee will not officially approve regulations except as required by state law or in cases when strong community attitudes, or possible student or staff reaction, make it necessary or advisable for a regulation to have the Committee's advance approval.

The Superintendent is required to publish "rules and regulations pertaining to the conduct of teachers and students which have been adopted." Codes of discipline, as well as procedures used to develop such codes shall be filed with the Department of Education for information purposes only. Standards of conduct will be included in staff and student handbooks. These handbooks will be reviewed and approved annually by the School Committee.

ADOPTED: OCTOBER, 2007

LEGAL REF.: M.G.L. 71:37H

SOURCE: SOUTHBRIDGE

POLICY DISSEMINATION

The Superintendent is directed to establish and maintain an orderly plan for preserving and making accessible the policies adopted by the Committee and the regulations needed to put them into effect.

Accessibility is to extend at least to all employees of the school system, to members of the Committee, and, insofar as conveniently possible, to all persons in the community. A policy concerning a particular group or groups in the schools will be distributed to those groups prior to the policy's effective date.

All policy manuals distributed to anyone will remain the property of the Committee and will be considered as "on loan" to anyone, or any organization, in whose possession they might be at any time. They are subject to recall at any time deemed necessary for purposes of updating.

The School Committee's policy manual will be considered a public record and will be available for inspection at the Superintendent's office. Current policies will also be published on the District's website.

ADOPTED: OCTOBER, 2007

SOURCE: SOUTHBRIDGE

SUSPENSION OF POLICIES

The operation of any section or sections of School Committee policies not established by law or contract may be temporarily suspended by a two-thirds vote of Committee members present at any regular or special meeting. Any action to suspend policy must be reviewed at the next scheduled meeting and will be so noted on the agenda for that meeting.

ADOPTED: OCTOBER, 2007

SOURCE: SOUTHBRIDGE

SCHOOL COMMITTEE-STAFF COMMUNICATIONS

Staff Communications to the School Committee

All communications or reports to the Committee or any of its subcommittees from staff members will be submitted through the Superintendent. This procedure does not deny the right of any employee to appeal decisions of administration to the Committee except in those matters that are outside of the Committee's legal authority. The Superintendent will be notified of the forthcoming appeal processed in accordance with the Committee's policy on complaints and grievances.

School Committee Communications to Staff

All official communications, policies, and directives of staff interest and concern will be communicated through the Superintendent. The Superintendent will develop appropriate methods to keep staff fully informed of the Committee's problems, concerns and actions.

Visits to Schools

School Committee members interested in visiting schools or classrooms will inform the Superintendent of such visits and make arrangements for visitations through the principals of the various schools. Official visits by Committee members will occur only under Committee authorization.

ADOPTED: OCTOBER, 2007

SOURCE: SOUTHBRIDGE

COMMITTEE COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE PUBLIC

Committee members will refer compliments, suggestions, and constructive criticism about operational matters directly to the Superintendent of Schools for appropriate consideration and action.

No School Committee member will speak for, or in the name of, the total Committee.

ADOPTED: OCTOBER, 2007

LEGAL REF.: 39:32; 71:37.

SOURCE: SOUTHBRIDGE

USE OF ELECTRONIC MESSAGING BY SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS

As elected public officials, School Committee members shall exercise caution when communicating between and among themselves via electronic messaging services including, but not limited to, electronic mail (e-mail), Internet web forums, and Internet chat rooms.

Under the Open Meeting Law, deliberation by a quorum of members constitutes a meeting. Deliberation is defined as movement toward a decision including, but not limited to, the sharing of an opinion regarding business over which the Committee has supervision, control, or jurisdiction. A quorum may be arrived at sequentially using electronic messaging without knowledge and intent by the author.

School Committee members should use electronic messaging between and among members only for housekeeping purposes such as requesting or communicating agenda items, meeting times, or meeting dates. Electronic messaging should not be used to discuss Committee matters that require public discussion under the Open Meeting Law.

Under the Public Records Law, electronic messages between public officials may be considered public records. Therefore, in order to ensure compliance, the School Committee chairperson, in consultation with the Superintendent of Schools, shall annually designate a member of the central office staff who shall be copied on all electronic correspondence between and among members of the School Committee. These copies shall be printed and retained in the central office in the same fashion as any other School Committee records. School Committee members who do not have a computer or access to these messages shall be provided copies on a timely basis.

ADOPTED: OCTOBER, 2007

LEGAL REF.: M.G.L.4:7; 39:23A, 23B; 66:10

SOURCE: MASC

NEW SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBER ORIENTATION

In accordance with the requirements of Massachusetts General Law Chapter 71, Section 36A as amended on December 24th, 2002, each new School Committee member elected to the Southbridge School Committee is required to complete, within one year of their election or appointment, at least eight hours of orientation training. This orientation shall include, but is not limited to, a review of School Finance, the Open Meeting Law, Public Records Law, Conflict of Interest Law, Special Education Law, Collective Bargaining, School Leadership Standards and Evaluations, and the Roles and Responsibilities of School Committee Members.

The School Committee and Superintendent shall assist each new member to understand the Committee's functions, policies and procedures of the Committee as soon after election as possible. Each new member shall be given the following materials:

- A. A copy of the School Committee policy manual
- B. A copy of the Open Meeting Law
- C. A copy of the Conflict of Interest Regulations
- D. A copy of the district's budget
- E. Collective bargaining agreements and contracts
- F. Student and staff handbooks

Each new member shall also receive any other materials the Chair and/or the Superintendent determine to be necessary.

The Chair and/or Superintendent shall also clarify policy:

- A. arranging visits to schools or administrative offices
- B. requesting information regarding school district operations
- C. responding to community requests/complaints concerning staff or programs
- D. handling confidential information

Whether appointed or elected, new members should be advised that they are also members of the Massachusetts Association of School Committees, Inc. and should be encouraged to utilize the services and resources MASC provides by attending meetings or workshops specifically designed for new Committee members. Their expenses at these meetings or workshops will be reimbursed in accordance with established School Committee policy.

ADOPTED: OCTOBER, 2007

LEGAL REF.: M.G.L. 71:36A

SOURCE: MASC

SCHOOL COMMITTEE CONFERENCES, CONVENTIONS, AND WORKSHOPS

To provide continuing in-service training and development for its members, the School Committee encourages the participation of all members at appropriate School Committee conferences, workshops and conventions. However, in order to control both the investment of time and funds necessary to implement this policy, the Committee establishes these principles and procedures for its guidance:

1. A calendar of School Committee conferences, conventions and workshops will be maintained by the Committee secretary. The Committee will periodically decide which meetings appear to be most promising in terms of producing direct and indirect benefits to the school system. At least annually, the Committee will identify those new ideas or procedures and/or cost benefits that can be ascribed to participation at such meetings.
2. Funds for participation at such meetings will be budgeted on an annual basis. When funds are limited, the Committee will designate which of its members would be the most appropriate to participate at a given meeting.
3. Reimbursement to Committee members for their travel expenses in accordance with the travel expense policy for staff members.
4. When a conference, convention, or workshop is not attended by the full Committee, those who do participate will be requested to share information, recommendations, and materials acquired at the meeting.

ADOPTED: OCTOBER, 2007

LEGAL REF.: M.G.L. 40:5

SOURCE: SOUTHBRIDGE

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBER COMPENSATION AND EXPENSES

The School Committee shall be compensated in accordance with the Southbridge Home Rule Charter. No member of the School Committee shall be employed as a teacher, or Superintendent of public schools.

Upon submitting vouchers and supporting bills for expenses incurred in carrying out specific services previously authorized by the Committee, members may be reimbursed from school funds.

Reimbursable expenses may include the cost of attendance at conferences of School Committee associations and other professional meetings or visitations when such attendance and expense payment has had prior School Committee approval.

ADOPTED: OCTOBER, 2007

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. 40:5; 71:52
Southbridge Home Rule Charter

SOURCE: SOUTHBRIDGE

SCHOOL COMMITTEE LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

The Committee will keep itself informed of pending legislation and actively communicate its concerns and make its position known to elected representatives at both the state and national level.

The Committee will work with its legislative representatives, with the Massachusetts Association of School Committees, and other concerned groups in developing an annual, as well as a long-range, legislative program. One of the major objectives of the Committee's legislative program will be to seek full funding for all state and federally mandated programs.

The Committee will annually designate a person--who may or may not be a member of the Committee--to serve as its legislative representative. This person will be authorized to speak on the Committee's behalf with respect to legislation being considered by the Massachusetts Legislature or the United States Congress or their respective committees. In all dealings with individual elected representatives, the Legislature or Congress, the Committee's representative will be bound by the official positions taken by the School Committee.

ADOPTED: OCTOBER, 2007

SOURCE: SOUTHBRIDGE

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIPS

The Committee will maintain memberships in the national, state and regional School Committees (boards) associations and take an active part in the activities of these groups.

It may also maintain institutional memberships in other educational organizations, which the executive officer and Committee find to be of benefit to members and personnel.

The materials and benefits of institutional memberships will be distributed and used to the best advantage of the Committee and the staff.

ADOPTED: OCTOBER, 2007

SOURCE: SOUTHBRIDGE