

CHESHIRE BOARD OF EDUCATION
MINUTES OF THE POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING
Held Virtually via YouTube Live Stream
November 10, 2020 – 6:30 PM

Public access made available through live streaming via Cheshire Public Schools YouTube Channel at www.youtube.com/cheshirepublicschools. Public comments were accepted at CPSCovid19@cheshire.k12.ct.us.

Committee Members Present: Adam Grippo, Chair; Tim White
Committee Members Absent: Kathryn Hallen
Administrators Present: Jeffrey Solan, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

1. CALL TO ORDER – 6:35 P.M.

Mr. Grippo called the meeting to order and led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

2. Public Comment via CPSCovid@cheshire.k12.ct.us.

None.

3. Review Policies for Discussion/First Reading.

4117.5 Termination of Employment

The Committee continued their discussions regarding termination/discipline of staff members. Dr. Solan reported that he spoke with the Board attorney regarding questions from the previous meeting.

Regarding notification of public new hires or resignations, the attorney said it is a fairly common practice, but it is uncommon to state a reason for termination or resignation. Although it is not illegal to release the information, it could result in defamation of character charges. The Superintendent confirmed that any disciplinary actions are subject to the Freedom of Information Act. The only information that cannot be released is evaluation information for any certified staff, under the level of Superintendent. An individual can make a blanket FOI request for all disciplinary actions. He reminded the Board that we are not required to create documents for FOI requests and because we do not have a running list or document that complies with that request, there would be no responsive documentation to provide.

Regarding sharing information on separation agreements or disciplinary actions, our attorney advised that it is permissible under the FOIA, but again, he would advise against it. Dr. Solan repeated his reservations and noted his leadership style is to praise in public, punish in private. He said if we start punishing in public, we would create a combative environment and it would be better to address situations in cooperation with the union. The goal is to change the behavior. Dr. Solan said he would strongly advise against public criticism, as it is bad for culture, bad for recruiting and bad for time management. In addition, it would create a number of grievances which would have to be addressed.

Mr. White said he appreciates and respects what the Superintendent is saying, but he is speaking about items such as separation agreements or suspensions, not minor disciplinary actions, and he believes the voters have a right to know about those things. He is concerned about the #METOO movement and bad apples leaving this school system and going into another school system. The Superintendent explained that when a person applies for a position, their previous employers must sign-off on a form stating that there are no reasons they should not be hired.

Dr. Solan said they can include hires and resignations in the Superintendent's report and he will research for proper the procedures to put into place. Mr. Grippo suggested if we were to report on separation agreements or suspensions, the information should be anonymized before being included as part of the Superintendent's Report.

4118.231/4218.231 Personnel – Certified/Non-Certified – Alcohol, Drugs, and Tobacco

Dr. Solan explained that CAFE is offering this optional language addition to districts for review. The revision would include the following language: *Employees are prohibited from possessing or using any product with cannabidiol (CBD), whether derived from hemp or cannabis, regardless of the amount of THC in the product or to the extent to which it is legal or illegal under state law.* The committee discussed this policy revision, but requested more information before deciding to make the change.

5131.6 Students – Alcohol Use, Drugs, and Tobacco

Dr. Solan explained this change also has to do with CBD oil, and he would like to do more research on this optional policy change before bringing it forward to the Committee.

Bylaw 9321.2 - Time, Place, Notification, Type of Meetings-Electronic Board of Education Meetings

This policy is provided by CAFE to give guidance to Boards regarding holding Electronic Board meetings during the pandemic. Dr. Solan explained that Boards are only allowed to meet virtually while under the Governor's Executive Order. Dr. Solan will update this bylaw for review at the next committee meeting to align with our procedures.

Bylaw 9325.43 - Attendance at Meetings via Electronic Communications

Dr. Solan explained that if adopted, this optional bylaw would allow a Board member to attend a meeting electronically as long as the stated guidelines are followed, and the member has received permission from the Board Chair. Board members attending electronically cannot simply vote electronically, but must be connected with the meeting throughout the discussion of business. If a Board member electronically joins the meeting after an item of business has been opened, the remotely located member shall not participate, nor cast a vote, until the next item of business is opened.

MOTION by Mr. White, seconded by Mr. Grippo.

MOVED that the Policy Committee bring forward Bylaw #9321.2 - Time, Place, Notification, Type of Meetings-Electronic Board of Education Meetings and Bylaw #9325.43 - Attendance at Meetings via Electronic Communications to the full Board for a first reading.

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously 2-0.

4. **Other.**

None.

5. **Adjournment.**

There being no further business, it was unanimously agreed to adjourn the meeting at 7:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Adam Grippo, Policy Committee Chair

Attest: _____
Carol Jesensky, Board Clerk

Filed Electronically: 11/17/2020 .