

BOE Policy Committee Minutes
Wednesday, September 27, 2023, 9:00 am – 10:30 am
Municipal Building, Council Chambers
3 Primrose St. Newtown, CT 06470

CALL TO ORDER Meeting was called to order at 9:00 am

IN ATTENDANCE Dan Cruson, Deborra Zukowski, Todd Higgins, Chris Melillo, Anne Uberti, Sarah Connell, 5 public, 1 press

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None

APPROVE MINUTES Dan Cruson made a motion to approve the minutes of August 16, 2023 and September 13, 2023. Todd Higgins seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

Discussion and possible action:

Item	Reports
<p>Policy 6163.1 – Selection of Library Media Resources</p> <p>A.Uberti informed the committee that she can offer different wording to the language in the selection criteria after the Board’s discussion on September 19th. The new language is <u><i>“To provide a diverse collection that contains content by and about a wide array of people and cultures to authentically reflect a variety of ideas, information, stories and experiences”</i></u></p> <p>T. Higgins asked if the proposed language was directly from the ALA. A. Uberti answered that it was a copy and paste.</p> <p>D. Zukowski believes the new language is more acceptable.</p> <p>T. Higgins asked why A.Uberti changed the language.</p> <p>A.Uberti answered that the discussion at the last Board meeting around the wording of the original language made her look for alternative language. She did not hear any concerns with this change from the LMS.</p> <p>D. Zukowski believes that the new language makes it clear what the role of the LMS is.</p> <p>The committee agrees with A.Uberti’s new proposed language.</p> <p>A.Uberti stated that she did not make any edits regarding community members, per the BOE’s discussion. In going back and considering how to change it, A.Uberti wanted to share some thoughts about community members vs. school community members vs. school employees. She has a few concerns about restricting community member to school community member. The biggest concern is the reconsideration process would move closer to FERPA and that would take away the transparency, which is</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A.Uberti will make the approved edits and send to K. June for BOE second read.

important to the Board. Defining “school community member” and can a tax payer say they are being denied a right to voice concern because they do not have a child in NPS are other concerns of A.Uberti’s.

T. Higgins asked if A.Uberti consulted with counsel subsequent to the last Board meeting about the discussion around who has standing under this policy. A.Uberti said that she has.

A.Uberti reminded the Board that under this proposed policy; school community members have a mechanism to restrict books for their individual child.

D. Cruson is torn between changing the definition. He asked A.Uberti what the majority of the Board felt. A.Uberti feels that the BOE wanted to restrict the community member definition.

T. Higgins believes a parent of a child in NPS is enough to have a standing in this policy. He believes community member should be for parent/guardians of K-12 students. He reminded the committee that if other stakeholders have any concerns, there are ways to voice their concern, for example, at a public forum.

D. Zukowski also agreed for the starting point to be parents/guardians of K-12 students. She suggested adding a paragraph stating “All other Newtown residents can reach out to the Board if they have a concern”. The committee does not believe including that statement is necessary. They believe it is a given that the public can contact the Board if they have concerns.

D. Cruson agrees defining community members to parents/guardians of K-12 students is acceptable.

The committee discussed including school staff to community members. The policy would have to include all staff or nothing.

D. Cruson asked C. Melillo for his opinion.

C. Melillo said that he does not want to alienate our school staff. He believes they should be heard if they have concerns.

After discussion, the committee agreed that the staff can voice their concerns internally.

A.Uberti made edits regarding transparency. After she heard feedback from the Board and LMS, she thought it was important to add language detailing how transparent the process would be.

A.Uberti does not feel it a good idea publicly posting the list of reconsidered books on the website. Her recommendation is having the LMS will maintain a list and will be available upon request.

A.Uberti also made it clear that the District will not be required to entertain reconsideration requests for which a determination has been made within the previous five years.

D. Cruson is concerned about an increase in FOIA requests.

D. Zukowski asked if there was a private place that parents could obtain this list. She mentioned PowerSchool being an option.

A.Uberti said she would have to look into it.

<p>T. Higgins does not agree that maximum transparency and posting the list online will be problematic. He believes it should be a point of pride for the District to show the public what the District has done after what we went through last Spring.</p> <p>C. Melillo understands both sides.</p> <p>The committee agrees discussing this more at the Board level and having A.Uberti look into other options of distributing the list to the parents/guardians.</p> <p>A.Uberti strongly believes that a lot of concerns can be resolved if the community members talk to the LMS first. A lot of what happened in the Spring could have been avoided if conversations were had.</p> <p>The committee agrees with the language in the form, specifically the statement that <i>“the privacy of the individuals submitting reconsideration request may not be protected if, once submitted, this form is the subject of a FOIA request. FOIA grants the public the right to request records from any federal agency.”</i></p> <p>D. Cruson moved to send Policy 6163.1 – Selection of Library Media Resources to the Board of Education for a second read at the next meeting. D. Zukowski seconded. Motion unanimously approved.</p>	
--	--

NEW BUSINESS

Discussion and possible action:

Item	Reports
<p>Policy 3160 – Budget Procedures and Line Item Transfers D. Cruson postponed this discussion until the next policy committee meeting. He asked D. Zukowski to make edits and bring them to the next meeting.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion and Possible Action at the next policy committee meeting.
<p>Policy 1700 – Possession of Firearms or Deadly Weapons D. Cruson postponed this discussion until the next policy committee meeting. M. Pompano will bring an edited version to the next policy meeting.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S. Connell will invite M. Pompano to the next policy meeting. • Discussion and Possible Action at the next policy committee meeting.
<p>Discussion about including supporting documents with publicly posted agendas D. Cruson postponed this discussion until the next policy committee meeting.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion and Possible Action at the next policy committee meeting.

UPDATE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

None

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Katie Mauro, LMS at Sandy Hook School asked for the committee to consider what would happen if the reconsideration requests were only targeting specific communities like the LGBTQ+ community.

Sara Wasley, LMS at Reed Intermediate asked the committee to make it clear that forms cannot be submitted unless they are complete. She also asked if someone will analyze the duties and responsibilities of a LMS because the roles and management have evolved over the years.

Heather Symes, 6 Lake Road, spoke about concerns regarding filing a FOIA request for the list of books being reconsidered. While we have the legal right to file a FOIA request, there became a fear to file a FOIA because of harassment. She applauded the LMS for all of the hard work that they do.

ADJOURNMENT

Dan Cruson made a motion to adjourn the meeting. D. Zukowski seconded. Motion was unanimously approved. Meeting was adjourned at 10:53 a.m.