The following policies were discussed:

**Bylaw #9325.2 Order of Business** - The Policy Committee had two concerns on this Policy that was adopted on May 10, 2011:

1. *In an effort to have the public be more polite and civil when they are making their remarks in public session, the Committee feels the Chair should read a statement to the public.*

2. *Should the public session be changed to the way it was before May 10, 2011, with the public session in the beginning of the meeting for both agenda and non agenda items.*

The Policy Committee had asked the above attending individuals to give their opinion on how the change in the bylaw was working:

Marco Gaylord suggested some districts have the people sign in in advance, so you know who is going to be speaking and to what agenda item he/she is speaking to. If there is any derogatory insult, can it be cut off. Bill Grady wants to look at Marco’s info on. The chair has a gavel, but the rest of the BOE can bring the problem to attention of chair – Point of Order. There is a higher standard for public figures. Steve McKeever said it is not fair to individuals and teachers when they are attacked and outright lies are stated.

Marco stated we want people to come up to say positive things. It has gotten to a point where it is difficult for people to sit and listen and watch these actions. Possibly have people call ahead, be put on agenda, must be a better way. Marco will forward via email the committee and attendees information he had researched last year.

Michael Frechette said it is a meeting held in public not a public meeting. Feels the Board should gavel inappropriate actions and comments. It is important to end this conduct as it sets such a negative tone to the meeting. The administration needs to be supported by the Board. A lot of positive things are happening.
Jim Gaudreau stated a policy can be written, but we must have a strong follow through. Bill Grady said it is the responsibility of all board members not just the chair. Believes people would appreciate a different attitude at the meeting.

Sheila Daniels questioned, “Under communication section, could Board members make a statement to clarify something that may have been mentioned during the public session and noted that had been done in past meetings? Michael Frechette said responding is a dangerous road to go down. Ava said it is uncomfortable and the process should be changed. Possibly a Sign in sheet. What is motivation to change?

Steve McKeever asked whether you can stop a person from verbally attacking an individual. Complicated answered, don’t know the sanctions we can apply. The Board does not have to have public sessions. To take away public sessions punishes the individuals there for a good reason. Public session is a privilege. Steve McKeever is wary of getting rid of public session as it would be seen very negatively.

Ed McKeon feels we should be firm in the way we gavel down. Having a STRONG statement read every single meeting. We need a statement that expresses the entire board’s concern. Maybe we can get back to a more civil process.

Chair Sheila Daniels asked all in attendance to share their opinion as to whether we should go back to one public session or keep the two public sessions. All present were in favor of returning to the one public session. Bob Fontaine and Barbara Senges agreed something should be put in the statement that if a person gets up to speak – speak to an issue not a particular person. We will not tolerate insults, naming of employees not acceptable. Need to have that message really gotten across. People are afraid of being a target themselves. People are afraid to say good things. Taking a low profile is better than becoming a target. Believe administrators would want to speak but have a fear of retaliation. Joe Cassella stated what really bothers him is that people and students are watching this behavior. If we are letting adults talk that way, what are the students to think? We need to watch and monitor this.

Ed McKeon feels we need to be firm as a board and not let attacks happen. Need a strong statement and gavel. The present statement is not very strong. Ava feels the new statement drafted should include students are watching and with our school climate we need to adopt the proper philosophy and put our own spin on it. The statement will be put together by Bill Grady and emailed among the Board Members for finalization.

The Policy Committee recommended the elimination of the second public session from the Order of Business and that the revised Bylaw #9325.2 be presented to the Board of Education at its next meeting and will require two readings. All members agreed.

#5113.1 - Attendance/ Excuses/Course Credit — Bob Fontaine and Ralph D’Amato presented an overview of the attendance policy and the rule that after 16 absences, or 8 for half year, student is in danger of losing credit for course. There are excused absences as noted in the policy. After 4 unexcused absences a letter goes home. Every 4 unexcused absences get another letter from us by mail. Middletown High School attendance rate is between 90 and 94%.
Michael Frechette stated it seems parents have an issue with excused and unexcused, unable to get doctor’s note, making up work, doctor’s availability to get note.

Ralph D’Amato feels the policy is enough and serves its purpose Very few students exceed the unexcused absences. This policy has enough teeth to deter the masses.

Bob Fontaine wanted input from Board whether we are consistent with what our philosophy should be. He noted that during Freshmen Orientation quite a lot of time is given to attendance with students and parents.

Ed McKeon stated if the policy is working don’t change. Ava Hart says stick with it. Thinks it is a great policy. Michael said it works for the masses and has flexibility to work in different situations.

Ralph said it their job to get in-services when working with families. Bob Fontaine said there are a number of families with a wide range of medical issues. He also stated that the student has to come over 55 minutes late to be considered tardy.

Bill Grady said it is good for the board to know that parents are held accountable for educational neglect. Ralph said once a month he meets with the Department of Family Services. Before it gets to Michael’s desk, many steps and agencies are involved to address a problem.

The credit hearings can accommodate parents’ schedule, meet early in the morning to late at night. Ava said policy is subjective. It is always good to look at the data.

Ralph is working with middle schools and the School counselors to inform parents it is their responsibility to get their child to school on time.

The Policy Committee decided Policy #5111 should remain as it is and not be sent to the Board for any revisions.

Policy #5111 – Admission/ Placement -- Michael Frechette stated that Tom Termine, Truant Officer, is doing a terrific job. He is like a detective finding out where the parents are and the true situation for each child.

Michael stated that with the many changes in families living situations, a change to the enrollment form is required. The following words “full time 7 days per week” will be taken out. He does not believe any changes need to be made to the policy, only the above mentioned form change, which does not need to be reviewed by the Board.

The Policy Committee will review Policy #5141.4 – Child abuse – at the scheduled February 28, 2012, meeting.

The Policy Committee Meeting adjourned at 9:20 a.m.

The next Policy Committee meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, February 28, 2012, at 8:00 A.M. in the Board Room of the Dr. Alfred B. Tychsen Administration Building.

kfb