Board of Education Policy Committee Members Present:
Sheila Daniels, Chair, Christopher Drake
Also Present:
Dr. Patricia Charles, Superintendent, Dr. Enza Macri, Associate Superintendent, Lynda MacPherson, Manager of Financial Operations, Colleen Weiner, Principal MHS, Cheryl Gonzalez, Principal WWMS, Kathleen F. Bengtson, Administrative Assistant, and Meg Susi, Community Member.

The following policies and bylaws were discussed.

#9321 – Time, Place and Notification of Meetings – Electronic participation –
This bylaw was originally sent to the BOE for its first reading on 2/9/2016. Before the meeting, Christopher Drake had reworked a revision of the bylaw done by Deborah Cain and both versions were brought forward to the BOE at that meeting. Christopher Drake’s version of the bylaw was accepted as a first reading. This bylaw has been brought back to the Policy Committee for a second look before it is submitted for its final second reading.

Christopher had looked at other districts’ handling of the electronic participation issue. He liked Stratford’s, but he didn’t see anything that was better or had an interesting idea we had not heard about. He limited his search to our DRG. The committee review the changes that were proposed by Dr. Charles.

- #1 Insert the word **Short-term** before employment purposes – she wanted to quantify it.
- #3 The committee decided to take off the allowance of more than two times for participation. (strike out #3) (numbers will be renumbered)
- #4 now 3. Put conditions as outlined in #5 – to make it consistent.
- #5a Now requires the electronic participating member must **see and hear** the other members at the meeting.
- #5b When possible, video of the member participating electronically will also be provided.
- Add #8. A BOE or committee meeting may not be chaired by a person who is not physically present at the meeting. If the chairperson is participating remotely, another Board member shall chair the meeting.
Christopher Drake stated he has found Adobe Connect gives a lot more flexibility compared to Skype and other types of connections. He believes it costs about $500 a year for a license and requires a good WiFi which will need to be tested. Yale University and Boston College are using it, and he assumes they researched it carefully. Dr. Charles believes we should try a couple of vehicles. Technology differs so drastically between the BOE Central Office building and the City Council Chamber. We need to take into consideration that we cannot always control the technology at the location of all our meetings. Michael Skott, Director of Technology, will be consulted on this matter. Sheila noted concern around the expense of this suggestion.

This revised bylaw will be brought forward to the Board for its **SECOND** reading.

**Policy #3320 – Purchasing Procedures** – This policy was accepted by the BOE for its first reading on 1/12/2016. On its second reading 1/26/2016, Chairman Vincent Loffredo motioned to have it tabled to after the budget was approved. As this is an important issue, Dr. Charles requested this policy be reviewed at this meeting.

Christopher Drake stated Vincent Loffredo told him he wants a monthly report, which would show more transparency on the monies expended by the Board. Christopher noted under FOI you are only required to give what you have and there is no need to create documents. Idea of this requested report is to make it more available to more people. Christopher thinks transparency is both a carrot and a stick. It shows - one- you are being watched and two - to root out corruption if it exists.

Christopher Drake said the core of this idea is reasonable. The issue is we want a policy that sheds light on how money is spent by the BOE. The initial issue is transparency in the payment process. Christopher said they were looking for a report that would be easily produced every month, whatever we capture in AUC, that could be sent to the BOE members electronically. This report should consist of vendors paid, amounts paid, invoice numbers, maybe amounts budgeted amounts encumbered. It is actually a basic expenditure report, which will also list any transferred items.

Dr. Charles believed the request would require a lot of time and paper. Chris said they want an electronic report that would entail only hitting a button to produce the report every month and then email it to the Board, no printing involved. Dr. Charles wanted to know what will be done with this report? She feels for the amount of time and money it will cost to produce the report, in reality, only one or two people could actually read and understand it. Most people won’t even open it. The Central Office staff is stretched thin as it is. Pat asked how many people will be viewing these reports to warrant the expenditure of time. We have more important things that we need to talk about. It is minutia - taking time away from educating our kids, which should be our main goal. Sheila agreed, noting any additional information might be shared at the Budget Committee level. She compared the work of the Policy Committee, we delve into policies and bring them to the Board and wondered why we would not do the same for the Budget Committee.
Lynda MacPherson stated the City of Middletown does not require this report. Lynda has stated that since Dr. Charles and she have gotten here things have gotten a lot better.

Dr. Charles wants to change the regulation to mirror the city. We want to describe in the regulation what the process is.

Lynda stated the bid component takes so much time; we have to rely on state contracts. She also told the committee that the Business Office is in the process of creating a routing sheet for all bids and contracts, so everyone should sign off on the steps before a contract is signed. With this routing sheet, Dr. Charles will have confidence that all required steps have been completed before the contract is signed. Dr. Charles asked Christopher if he had a flow chart. He said he would forward one to her.

Meg Susi feels you have to put faith in smaller groups. There is so much to cover in one BOE meeting. Board meetings are getting further and further from education. The BOE made it clear they don’t want long meetings, but when do we get to discuss and hear about education?

Sheila Daniels stated she feels we are catering to single Board member requests and feels we need to be working in a non-partisan manner. As Policy Committee chair, she should be receiving additional information from other Board members directly, not through a member of the committee. Board members should be working together. We are not single members; we are a party of nine and should be working together, not pushing singular agenda items.

Sheila reiterated these questions should be addressed by the Budget Committee and perhaps be included in the regulations, not the policy itself. Christopher stated he is okay with bringing the policy forward as is and the budget committee will work on other transparency reports.

The Committee discussed the matter and recommended this mandatory revised policy be brought forward to the Board at its next meeting for its SECOND reading.

Policy #6146 – Graduation Requirements – This is a mandated legal change. At the last Policy Committee Meeting, this policy was reviewed and scheduled to be sent to the Board. After revising the regulations, Colleen Weiner had a few questions on the wording of the proposed policy and requested the Policy Committee take another look at it before presenting to the Board.

Ms. Weiner stated she wants clarification on the credits awarded in Middle Schools. Sheila's concern is with World Language. If students are awarded high school credits, she wants to be sure the curriculum is exactly the same. The mandate now says every child must have two years of world language. Colleen indicated every period is filled completely, and students are using them to the fullest. Now with the distribution of Chrome books, the students are constantly working. Cheryl Gonzalez shared concern around the consistency of the courses at WWMS vs MHS. Dr. Charles wanted to know if they take the same exam. Dr. Macri said they take the same assessment, however, a good number of students had to drop down to Spanish II because they were not prepared for Spanish III. Cheryl, Colleen and Enza agree that we have lost the
conversational language piece which helped students learn to speak the language. There seems to be more focus on the grammar piece.

The issue at hand is: Should the Board award high school credit for middle school classes? Sheila Daniels would be okay with credits for middle school if it is the exact same course as the high school. After a full discussion, the Committee agreed to allow the transfer of these credits. This option will be noted in the regulation, not the policy.

The Committee discussed the optional 50 hours of community service offered by the state, “Beginning with the class of 2021, students that successfully complete and document 50 or more hours of community service and meet statutory criteria will earn one-half credit toward graduation. The State Board of Education shall award a community service recognition award to any student who satisfactorily completes 50 hours or more of community service.” As this is an option, it will be found in the regulation and not in the policy.

The Committee discussed the matter and recommended this mandatory revised policy be brought forward to the Board at its next meeting for its first and final reading.

Policy #5121 – Examination/Grading/Rating – When the Policy Committee was reviewing the Graduation Requirements policy, Sheila Daniels requested we look at this policy and how the grading is defined and how extra credit is given.

Colleen Weiner proposed changing the wording of the policy to CABE’s version which defines the new state testing requirements.

After a lengthy discussion on how and when extra credit will be allowed, the Committee proposed adding the words /Extra Credit to the title of the policy and also include the following language in the policy:

Grades are based solely on academic achievement. All extra credit must be directly related to the standard.

A financial or transportation burden shall not be imposed on students to earn extra credit.

The Committee discussed the matter and recommended this revised policy be brought forward to the Board at its next meeting for its first reading.

The next Policy Committee meeting is scheduled tentatively for Tuesday, March 15, 2016, at 8:00 A.M. in the Board Room of the Dr. Alfred B. Tychsen Administration Building.

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