

SECTION B

BOARD GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS

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SCHOOL COMMITTEE OPERATIONAL GOALS

The School Committee is responsible to the people for whose benefit the school system has been established. The Committee's current decisions will influence the course of education in our schools for years to come. The Committee and each of its members must look to the future and to the needs of all people more than the average citizen finds necessary. This requires a comprehensive perspective and long-range planning in addition to attention to immediate problems.

The School Committee's primary responsibility is to establish those purposes, programs, and procedures that will best produce the educational achievement needed by our students. The Committee is charged with accomplishing this while also being responsible for wise management of resources available to the school system. The Committee must fulfill these responsibilities by functioning primarily as a legislative body to formulate and adopt policy, by selecting an executive officer to implement policy, and by evaluating the results. It must carry out its functions openly, while seeking the comments of public, students, and staff in its decision-making processes.

The School Committee will apply these principles to its goal setting as follows:

1. Periodically setting performance objectives for the School Committee itself and evaluating their accomplishment.
2. Developing an educational vision and engaging in short and long-term strategic planning to guide policy decisions including those regarding budget, curriculum, student assessment, employee and personnel, staff development and facilities management.
3. Setting objectives for performance for each position and function in the system.
4. Allowing the people responsible for carrying out objectives to have a role in setting them.
5. Establish practical and simple goals.
6. Conducting a concrete and periodic review of performance against these goals.

EVALUATION OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

The School Committee will periodically establish realistic objectives related to Committee procedures and relationships. At the end of a specified length of time, the Committee will measure its performance against the stated objectives.

The following areas of School Committee operations and relationships are representative of those in which objectives may be set and progress appraised:

1. Communication with the public
2. School Committee - Superintendent relationships
3. School Committee member development and performance
4. Policy development
5. Educational leadership
6. Fiscal management
7. School Committee meetings
8. Performance of subcommittees of the School Committee
9. Interagency and governmental relationships

When the Committee has completed its self-evaluation, the members will discuss the results in detail and formulate a new series of objectives. At the same time, the Committee will set an approximate date on which the next evaluation will be conducted.

Implied in the concept of evaluation is an assumption that individuals and Committees are capable of improvement. The School Committee believes that its performance will be improved if evaluation is carried out systematically in accordance with good planning, conscientious follow-through, and careful assessment of results.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE LEGAL STATUS

The School Committee is the governing board of the town's public school system. Although it functions as a duly elected Committee of town government, the School Committee has, unlike other town boards, autonomous and absolute authority within limitations established by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to carry out the educational policies of the state and guide the educational process.

State law provides that:

"Every town at its annual [town election] shall,, except when other provision is made by law or by charter, choose by ballot from its registered voters the following town officers for the following terms of office:

... Three or more members of the School Committee for terms of not more than three years In any case where three or more members of a board are to be elected for terms of more than one year, as nearly one-third as may be shall be elected annually."

The Natick Town Charter established School Committee membership as seven members.

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. 41:1 and 71:37 specifically, but powers and duties of School Committees are established throughout the General Laws of Massachusetts Relating to School Committees

CROSS REFS.: AA, School District Legal Status
BBA, School Committee Powers and Duties

SCHOOL COMMITTEE POWERS AND DUTIES

The School Committee has all the powers conferred upon it by state law and must perform those duties mandated by the state. These include the responsibility and right to determine policies and practices and to employ a staff to implement its directions for the proper education of the children of the community.

The Committee takes a broad view of its functions. It sees them as:

1. **Legislative or policymaking.** The Committee is responsible for the development of policy as guides for administrative action and for employing a Superintendent who will implement its policies.
2. **Appraisal.** The Committee is responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of its policies and their implementation.
3. **Provision of financial resources.** The Committee is responsible for adoption of a budget that will enable the school system to carry out the Committee's policies.
4. **Public relations.** The Committee is responsible for providing adequate and direct means for keeping the local citizenry informed about the schools and for keeping itself and the school staff informed about the needs and wishes of the public.
5. **Educational planning and evaluation.** The Committee is responsible for establishing educational goals and policies that will guide the Committee and staff for the administration and continuing improvement of the educational programs provided by the School District.
6. **Personnel.** The Committee shall select and terminate the Superintendent. The School Committee will also confirm the appointment of the Assistant Superintendent, Business Manager, and Director of Special Education.

LEGAL REF.: M.G.L. 71:37 specifically, but powers and duties of School Committees are established throughout the Massachusetts General Laws.

CROSS REF.: BB, School Committee Legal Status

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS: AUTHORITY AND DUTIES

A. PURPOSE: To define the authority and duties of the individual members of the School Committee.

B. POLICY:

I. Authority

- a. Because all powers of the School Committee derived from state laws are granted in terms of action as a group, members of the School Committee have authority only when acting as a Committee legally in session.
- b. The School Committee will not be bound in any way by any statement or action on the part of an individual member except when such statement or action is a result of specific instructions of the Committee.
- c. No member of the Committee, by virtue of their office, will exercise any administrative responsibility with respect to the schools or command the services of any school employee.
- d. The School Committee will function as a body and all policy decisions and other matters, as required by law, will be settled by an official vote of the Committee sitting in formal session.

2. Duties: The duties and obligations of the individual Committee members may be enumerated as follows:

- a. To become familiar with the General Laws of the Commonwealth relating to education and School Committee operations, regulations of the Massachusetts Board of Education, and policies and procedures of this School Committee and school department.
- b. To keep abreast of new laws and the latest trends in education.
- c. To have a general knowledge of the goals, objectives, and programs of Natick's public schools.
- d. To work effectively with other Committee members without trying either to dominate the Committee or neglect their share of the work.
- e. To respect the privileged communication that exists in executive sessions by maintaining strict confidentiality on matters discussed in these sessions, except that which becomes part of the public record, once it has been approved for release.
- f. To vote and act in Committee without bias for the good of the students.
- g. To accept the will of the majority vote in all cases, and to remember that they are one of a team and must abide by, and carry out, all Committee decisions once they are made.
- h. To represent the Committee and the schools to the public in a way that promotes interest and support.
- i. To refer questions and complaints to the proper school authorities.

J. To comply with the Ethics statutes as well as the accepted Code of Ethics for School Committee members. (File BCA)

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBER QUALIFICATIONS/OATH OF OFFICE

In order to serve on the School Committee, an individual must be a registered voter in the town from which he/she is elected or appointed and must take an oath of office as required by law.

Each new member will present to the Committee secretary official certification of having sworn the oath before an officer duly qualified to administer oaths prior to entering on his/her official duties as a member of the Committee. From the Town Clerk, newly elected or appointed Committee members, by law, receive, and sign a receipt for, a copy of the Massachusetts open meeting law governing the conduct of Committee meetings in general and executive sessions in particular.

Established by law and Town Charter

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. 39:23B; 41:1; 41:107
 M.G.L. 76:5 Amended 1993

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBER RESIGNATION

A current School Committee member who submits a resignation to the appropriate certifying authority terminates School Committee duties at the time of such resignation unless a later time is stated in the resignation.

Should a School Committee member move out of the town in which he or she holds office, that member shall be deemed to have vacated the office.

Established by law

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. 41:2; 41:109

UNEXPIRED TERM FULFILLMENT

When a vacancy on the School Committee occurs for any reason, the Board of Selectmen and the remaining members of the Committee share the responsibility for filling it.

As provided in the law, the School Committee will notify the Selectmen that a vacancy has been created within 30 days after it has occurred. After one week's notice has been given by the Committee to the Selectmen, so that voters of the town may have the opportunity to state their candidacy, the two governing bodies will meet to fill the vacancy by roll call vote.

For election to fill a vacancy, a candidate must receive a majority of the votes of the officers entitled to vote. The person so elected will fill the seat on the Committee until the next town election, at which time a member will be elected to serve the remainder of the term, if any.

LEGAL REF.: M.G.L. 41:11

CODE OF ETHICS

It shall be the constant endeavor of each School Committee member, representing all the citizens of Natick, to strive step by step toward ideal conditions for most effective School Committee service to their community, in a spirit of teamwork and devotion to public education as the greatest instrument for the preservation and perpetuation of our representative democracy.

- a. A School Committee member in their relations with their community should:
 - 1) Realize that their primary responsibility is to each and every one of the children in the Natick school system without distinction as to who they are or what their background may be.
 - 2) Recognize that their basic function is to be policy making and not administrative
 - 3) Remember that they are one of a team and must abide by, and carry out, all Committee decisions once they are made
 - 4) Be well informed concerning the duties of a Committee member on both a local and state level.
 - 5) Bear *in* mind that it is as important for the Committee to understand and evaluate the educational program of the schools as it is to plan for the business of school operation.
 - 6) Devote time, thought and study to the duties and responsibilities of a School Committee member so that they may render effective and creditable service.
 - 7) Take the initiative in helping all people of this community to have the best possible information in a timely manner about their schools, to the end that they will readily provide the finest possible school program, school staff, and school facilities.
 - 8) Remember that they represent the entire community at all times.
 - 9) Accept the office as a Committee member as means of unselfish service with no intent to "play politics," in any sense of the word, or to benefit personally from their Committee activities.
 - 10) Welcome and encourage active cooperation by citizens, organizations, and the media of communication in the district with respect to establishing policy on current school operations and proposed future developments.
- b. A School Committee member in their relations with their school administration should:
 - 1) Endeavor to establish sound, clearly-defined policies which will direct and support the administration.
 - 2) Recognize and support the administrative chain of command and refuse to act on complaints as an individual outside the administration.
 - 3) Give the chief administrator full responsibility for discharging their professional duties and hold them responsible for acceptable results.
 - 4) Refer all complaints to the administrative staff for solution, consistent with the administrative chain of command and only discuss them at Committee meetings if such solutions fail.
- c. A School Committee member *in* their relations with their fellow Committee members should:
 - 1) Work with their fellow board members in a spirit of harmony and cooperation in spite of differences of opinion that arise during vigorous debate of points at issue.
 - 2) Recognize that action at official meetings is binding and that they cannot bind the Committee outside of such meetings.
 - 3) Realize that they should not make statements or promises of how they vote on matters that will come before the Committee.
 - 4) Uphold the intent of executive sessions and respect the privileged communications that exist in executive sessions.
 - 5) Share pertinent information on school matters or personnel problems both with members of their Committee and with members of other committees who may be seeking help or information on school problems.

- 6) Make decisions only after all facts on a question have been presented and discussed, and base such decisions upon all available facts in each situation, consistent with their honest conviction in every case, unswayed by partisan bias of any kind.

**SCHOOL COMMITTEE ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING,
OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS**

A. PURPOSE:

To define the duties of the various officers of the School Committee and their manner of election.

B. POLICY:

1. Organizational Meeting

For the purpose of organizing, the School Committee, at an organizational meeting, held only for the purposes listed below, shall be scheduled for a date and time following the Annual Town Election and prior to the first regular meeting will elect from its membership a Chairperson, a Vice-Chairperson, and a Clerk all of whom will hold their respective offices for a term of one year or until a successor is elected.

- a) The meeting shall be called to order by the Executive Secretary of the Committee (the Superintendent), who shall preside during and until the election of the Chairperson.
- b) Nominations for the office of Chairperson will be made from the floor. The Chairperson shall be elected by voice vote of the members participating either remotely or in-person and voting. If no nominee receives a majority vote, the election will be declared null and void and nominations will be reopened.
- c) No member may serve as Chairperson for more than two consecutive years except by a separate 2/3 vote of the Committee to permit the then Chairperson to be considered a candidate in (b., above). No member shall serve more than three consecutive years.
- d) Upon election, the new Chairperson will preside, calling for the election of a Vice-Chairperson and Clerk, in order. The procedure used for their election will be the same as that for electing the Chairperson.
- e) Following the election of the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Clerk, the Recording Secretary, who shall not be a member of the School Committee, shall be appointed by the Committee.
- f) The Committee shall review subcommittee and liaison assignments and vacancies. To give members an opportunity to understand the commitment involved and/or express interest in an assignment, appointments to subcommittee and liaison positions shall occur at the next regular meeting.
- g) Any vacancy among the officers occurring between organizational meetings will be filled by a member elected by the School Committee. The election will be conducted as described above.
- h) Following election of officers at its organizational meeting, the School Committee may proceed into such special business as scheduled on the agenda.
- i) The Student Representative (elected in accordance with Chapter 71, Section 38M) will begin his/her term at the beginning of the next school year.
- j) The retention of School Committee counsel shall be reaffirmed at each organizational meeting and reviewed at such time if the Committee feels appropriate.

2. **Duties of the Chairperson:** The Chairperson of the School Committee has the same powers as any other member of the Committee to vote upon all measures coming before it, to offer resolutions and to discuss questions. He or she will perform those duties that are consistent with their office and those required by law, state regulations, and this Committee. In carrying out these responsibilities, the Chairperson will:

- a. Sign the instruments, acts, and orders approved by the Committee in its name and behalf.
- b. Consult with the Superintendent in the planning of the Committee's agendas.
- c. Confer with the Superintendent on matters that may occur between Committee meetings.

- d. Appoint subcommittees, subject to Committee approval.
- e. Call special meetings of the Committee as found necessary or requested in writing by members of the Committee.
- f. Be public spokesperson for the Committee at all times except as this responsibility is specifically delegated to others.
- g. Preside at all Committee meetings.
- h. Verify with the Superintendent annually that the Superintendent has completed reviews of direct reports.

If the Chairperson is unable to carry on the duties for an extended period of time, the School Committee will hold an organizational meeting and vote for a new Chairperson and a Vice Chairperson.

3. Duties of the Vice-Chairperson of Policy and Operations

The Vice-Chairperson of Policy and Operations will assume the duties of the Chairperson when the Chairperson is absent or incapacitated. In the absence of the Chairperson and the Vice Chairperson at any School Committee meeting, the Executive Secretary (Superintendent) shall call for the election of a Chairperson pro tem by the members present.

4. Duties of the Clerk

The Clerk will be responsible for a record of the meetings being prepared in accordance with by-law and supervise the Recording Secretary, who takes the notes and review them prior to their acceptance by the School Committee. The Clerk is to attest to the minutes and sign on the line for this purpose in the official book in which they are entered.

5. Duties of the Executive Secretary

The Superintendent shall be elected by the Committee as provided by law and shall serve as Executive Secretary and perform all the duties that are prescribed by law and such other duties, not inconsistent there to, as the majority of the Committee may direct.

As Executive Secretary of the School Committee the Superintendent shall cause to be kept and accessible a record of the proceedings of the Committee and shall keep on file all reports, communications, papers, and documents relating to the business of the Committee or belonging to it.

He or she shall issue notices of Committee meetings; shall furnish each member, in advance, an agenda for the forthcoming meeting which he or she shall have prepared with the Chairperson; shall provide a copy of the record of previous meetings as soon as possible; and shall perform such other duties as may be required by the Committee.

6. School Committee-Superintendent Relationship

The Committee will leave to the Superintendent all matters of decision and administration that come within his or her scope as executive officer or as professional leader of the school system. While the Committee reserves to itself the ultimate decision of all matters concerning general policy or expenditures of funds, it will normally proceed in these areas after receiving recommendations from its executive officer. Further:

- a. The Superintendent will have the privilege of asking guidance from the Committee with respect to matters of operation whenever appropriate. If it is necessary to make exceptions to an established policy, he or she will submit the matter to the Committee for advice and direction.

- b. The Superintendent will assist the Committee in reaching sound judgments and establishing policies, and will place before the Committee all relevant facts, information, and reports necessary to keep the Committee adequately informed of situations or business at hand.
- c. The Superintendent, after conferring with the Chairperson, shall notify members of the School Committee regarding any meetings between the Superintendent and the Chairperson touching on substantive matters, in a timely fashion.

7. Duties of the Recording Secretary (*Part of MASC Policy BDB*)

The Recording Secretary shall keep the minutes of School Committee meeting and shall have such other duties as the Committee and the Superintendent may determine.

REFERENCES:

71M.G.L.sec.36,380,41,42.
MASC, School Committee Policy Manual
41 M.G.L. sec. 1,41. 107.
Town of Natick Charter

Note: The treasurer of the town serves as treasurer of the School Committee (*Part of Policy BDB*)

Revised by the Natick School Committee: April 212, 2021

SCHOOL COMMITTEE SUBCOMMITTEES AND TASK FORCES

- I. Subcommittees: The School Committee will reconstitute its subcommittees at its annual organizational meeting or at the following regular meeting of the School Committee. Subcommittees may be created for a specific purpose and to make recommendations for Committee action.
 - a. The subcommittee will be established through action of the Committee.
 - b. The subcommittee chairperson and its members will be appointed by the Committee Chairperson, subject to approval by the Committee.
 - c. The subcommittee will be provided with a list of its functions and duties.
 - d. The subcommittee may make recommendations for Committee action, but it may not act for the School Committee.
 - e. The Committee Chairperson and Superintendent will be ex-officio members of all special subcommittees.
 - f. A subcommittee will be dissolved by the Committee upon completion of its assignment, or it may be dissolved by a vote of the Committee at any time.
 - g. The Chairperson of each subcommittee will provide copies of all subcommittee agendas and minutes to the School Committee.
 - h. All subcommittees of the School Committee are subject to the provisions of the Open Meeting Law.

NOTE: The open meeting law ~ and its exceptions ~ apply to both School Committee meetings and meetings of the subcommittees and task forces of the School Committee. The Chair of the subcommittee or the task force has responsibility for posting legal notice or all meetings.
2. Task Forces: The following general policies will govern the appointment and functioning of task forces (or advisory committees) to the School Committee other than the student advisory committee, which is governed by the terms of the Massachusetts General Laws.
 - a. Task forces may be created by the School Committee to serve to advise the Committee for special purposes or to provide continuing consultation in a particular area of activity. However, there will be no standing overall advisory committee to the School Committee.
 - b. The composition of task forces will take into consideration the specific tasks assigned to the task force. Members of the professional staff and/or students may be appointed to the task force as members or consultants, as found desirable.
 - c. Appointments to such task forces will be made by the School Committee; appointment of staff members to such task forces will be made by the Committee upon recommendation of the Superintendent.
 - d. Tenure of task force members will be one year only unless the member is reappointed.
 - e. Each task force will be clearly instructed as to its mission and time line as well as its relationship to the School Committee, the School Department and the media.

- f. Recommendations of task forces will be based upon research and fact.
- g. The School Committee possesses certain legal powers and prerogatives that cannot be delegated or surrendered to others. Therefore, all recommendations of a task force must be submitted to the School Committee.
- h. The Committee will have the sole power to dissolve any of its task forces and will reserve the right to exercise this power at any time during the life of any task force.

CROSS REF.: nB, Student Involvement in Decision Making
 BEC, Executive Sessions

SCHOOL COUNCILS

The School Committee believes that the school is the key unit for educational improvement and change and that successful school improvement is best accomplished through a school-based decision-making process. By involving those directly affected by any action or decision of the school council in the process of determining that action or decision, it helps to strengthen the commitment to those decisions by those most affected by its implementation.

Under this policy, the Principal shall have primary responsibility for the management of the school. Decisions which are made at the school level must be aligned with the budget, policies, curriculum, and long-range and short-range goals adopted by the School Committee. In addition, decisions must comply with any state and federal laws and regulations and with any negotiated agreements of the school District.

As enacted by the state legislature in the Education Reform Act of 1993, a school council shall be established in each school to advise the Principal in specific areas of school operation. The Principal, except as specifically defined in the law, shall have the responsibility for defining the composition of and forming the group pursuant to a representative process approved by the Superintendent and School Committee.

The following guidelines define the role of the school council: _

The School Council shall meet regularly with the Principal of the school and shall assist in:

1. Adoption of educational goals for the school that are consistent with state and local policies and standards.
2. Identification of the educational needs of the students attending the school.
3. Review of the school building budget.
4. Formulation of a school improvement plan that may be implemented only after review and approval by the Superintendent.

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. 71:38Q, 71:59C

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Principal, in conjunction with the school council, shall be responsible for preparing a written school improvement plan annually. This plan shall be written with the advice of the school council and submitted for approval to the Superintendent and review of the School Committee. The plan should be drafted with the following in mind:

1. The educational goals for the school consistent with the goals and standards, including student performance standards, as adopted by the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and by the School Committee.
2. An assessment of the needs of the school in light of the proposed educational goals.
3. The means to address student performance.
4. Professional development for the school's professional staff.
5. The enhancement of parental involvement in the life of the school, safety, and discipline.
6. The development of means for meeting the diverse learning needs of every child.
7. Any further subjects as the Principal, in consultation with the school council, shall consider appropriate, except that:
 - a. The council shall have no authority over matters that are subject to Chapter 150E, the collective bargaining law, and
 - b. The council may not expand the scope of its authority beyond that established in law or expressly granted by School Committee policy.

SUBMISSION AND APPROVAL OF THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The written school improvement plan shall be submitted by the Principal to the Superintendent for approval and the School Committee for review no later than July 1 of the year in which the plan is to be implemented.

Because the implementation of the plan is dependent on Superintendent approval, it is important that the school council be aware of certain expectations regarding the school improvement plan. The school improvement plan should:

1. Focus on improvement of student learning.
2. Specify expected student outcomes and measurable/observable results.
3. Align with the mission of the School District and any goals and policies of the School District including any potential impact on any feeder or followon schools.
4. Be consistent with state and federal law, School District policy, established curriculum and negotiated agreements.
5. Clearly identify actions to be taken on how changes will be implemented.
6. Include a plan on how to solicit community support for the changes being developed.
7. Indicate anticipated costs and available funding sources.
8. Delineate the method of evaluating and reporting progress and results.

If the school improvement plan is not approved by the Superintendent, it shall be returned to the Principal with specific comments as to the reason(s). The Principal shall revise the plan in cooperation with the school council, and resubmit it for approval. If the Superintendent does not review the school improvement plan within 30 days of its receipt, the plan shall be deemed to have been approved.

CONDUCT OF SCHOOL COUNCIL BUSINESS

The Principal shall, by law, serve as co-chair of the council. The second co-chair will be elected annually by the council members at its first meeting of the school year subsequent to the elections of new council members. The co-chairs will be responsible for the preparation of the agenda for the council meetings.

The school council shall meet at least once monthly during the school year. Meetings will be held outside of school hours. At its first meeting of the school year, the council will set its calendar of regular meetings for the year. Where circumstances warrant, the council may choose to call additional meetings.

School councils shall use consensus as the primary method to resolve issues and to formulate recommendations. Votes by majority may be taken at the discretion of the Principal and Robert's Rules of Order shall prevail if there are questions of procedure.

All meetings of the school council shall conform to the Open Meeting Law which stipulate that all meetings be open to the public, that meetings be posted at least 48 hours in advance, and that minutes of the meeting shall be maintained as required. The scope of the school council does not require, and therefore does not qualify for, executive session.

The Superintendent shall receive agendas and minutes of all school council meetings. The Superintendent shall provide copies of these materials to members of the School Committee upon request.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE ATTORNEY

- A. PURPOSE: To define the relationship between the School Committee and its attorney.
- B. POLICY: The School Committee may use the services provided by the town counsel. The Committee and the Superintendent may seek his or her services to counsel and represent the school system at various times.

However, because the complexity of school department operations often requires specialized legal services, the Committee may also retain an attorney or law firm - to provide additional legal services. The retention of School Committee counsel shall be reaffirmed at each organizational meeting and reviewed at such time if the Committee feels appropriate.

It will be the duty of the counsel for the Committee to advise the School Committee and the Superintendent on the specific legal problems submitted to him or her. He or she will attend meetings upon request and will be sufficiently familiar with Committee policies, practices, and actions under these policies, and with requirements of the school law to enable him or her to offer the necessary legal advice.

A decision to seek legal advice or assistance on behalf of the school system will be made by the Committee. The Superintendent may also take such action at the direction of the Committee. Requests by School Committee members for a legal opinion on any matter germane to the Committee's responsibilities will be made through the Chairperson, who will forward such requests, along with any related documents submitted by Committee members, to the School Committee's attorney. Any legal opinion so obtained shall be in writing at the request of the majority of the School Committee.

Many types of legal assistance are routine and do not require specific Committee approval or prior notice. However, when the Superintendent concludes that unusual types or amounts of professional legal service may be required, he or she will advise the Committee and seek either initial or continuing authorization for such service.

LEGAL REFS.: MGL 71:37E, 37F

CROSS REFS.: BOA, School Committee Organizational Meeting

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B. POLICY: The School Committee may use the services provided by the town counsel. The Committee and the Superintendent may seek his or her services to counsel and represent the school system at various times.

However, because the complexity of school department operations often requires specialized legal services, the Committee may also retain an attorney or law firm - to provide additional legal services. The retention of School Committee counsel shall be reaffirmed at each organizational meeting and reviewed at such time if the Committee feels appropriate.

It will be the duty of the counsel for the Committee to advise the School Committee and the Superintendent on the specific legal problems submitted to him or her. He or she will attend meetings upon request and will be sufficiently familiar with Committee policies, practices, and actions under these policies, and with requirements of the school law to enable him or her to offer the necessary legal advice.

A decision to seek legal advice or assistance on behalf of the school system will be made by the Committee. The Superintendent may also take such action at the direction of the Committee. Requests by School Committee members for a legal opinion on any matter germane to the Committee's responsibilities will be made through the Chairperson, who will forward such requests, along with any related documents submitted by Committee members, to the School Committee's attorney. Any legal opinion so obtained shall be in writing at the request of the majority of the School Committee.

Many types of legal assistance are routine and do not require specific Committee approval or prior notice. However, when the Superintendent concludes that unusual types or amounts of professional legal service may be required, he or she will advise the Committee and seek either initial or continuing authorization for such service.

MOL 71:37E, 37F

LEGAL REFS.: BDA, School Committee Organizational Meeting

CROSS REFS.:

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The School Committee will transact all business at official meetings of the Committee. These may be either regular or special meetings, defined as follows:

Regular meeting: . A regular meeting of the School Committee shall be held on the first and third Mondays of each month unless otherwise voted by the Committee.

1.

2. **Special meeting:** an official legal action meeting called between scheduled regular meetings to consider specific topics.

Every meeting of the School Committee, regular or special, will be open to the public in a matter compliant with the Open Meeting Law.

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. 30A

CROSS REFS.: BEC, Executive Sessions
BEDA, Notification of School Committee Meetings

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 Chairperson (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 Chairperson 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, or the discipline or dismissal, including the hearing of charges against, a member of the committee, a school department employee or student, or other individual.
2. Strategy with respect to non-union negotiations or to conduct collective bargaining sessions with non-union personnel.
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 by a preliminary screening committee. (The only position that the school committee would be involved in that might qualify would be for the position of Superintendent.) This exemption only applies if it can be determined that an open meeting will have a detrimental effect in obtaining qualified applicants. This shall not apply to applicants who have passed a prior preliminary screening. The Chair shall declare such detrimental effect at the time of the executive session.
9. To meet or confer with a mediator with respect to any litigation or public business.

10. To discuss trade secrets or confidential competitively-sensitive or other proprietary information conducted by a governmental body as an energy supplier.

(In exemption #1, an open meeting will be held if the individual involved so requests.)

Accurate records of the proceedings conducted in executive session 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 quarterly.

When a specific set of executive session minutes, not yet declassified, is requested by a member of the public, the School Committee, its Chair or the District's Public Records Officer, shall render a decision on declassification no later than its next meeting or within 30 days after the request, whichever occurs first.

All votes taken in executive session will be recorded roll call votes, and will become part of the minutes of executive sessions.

Established by law and Committee policy

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. 30A

CROSS REFS.: BDE, Subcommittees of the School Committee
BE, School Committee Meetings
KEB, Public Complaints about School Personnel

Revised & Approved by the Natick School Committee: October 1, 2018

SPECIAL PROCEDURES FOR CONDUCTING HEARINGS

.In conducting all public hearings including those required by law, the School Committee will:

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

Chair of the Committee or presiding officer 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 that must be followed to give everyone an opportunity to be heard.

In conformance with customary hearing procedures, 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. To assure that all who wish get a chance to speak, the Chair will recognize persons who have not commented previously during the hearing before recognizing persons who wish to remark a second time.

NOTIFICATION OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETINGS

As required by law, a minimum of 48 hours' advance notice (excluding Saturdays, Sundays and legal holidays) 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.

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. 30A:18-25

CROSS REF.: BE, School Committee Meetings

AGENDA FORMAT

The Superintendent, conferring with the Chairperson of the School Committee, will arrange the order of items on meetings agendas so that the Committee can accomplish its business as expeditiously as possible. The particular order may vary from meeting to meeting in keeping with the business at hand.

Items will be addressed in an order determined by the Chairperson.

Any School Committee member, staff member, or citizen may suggest items of business. The inclusion of such items, however, will be at the discretion of the Chairperson of the Committee. 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 wishes may speak briefly before the School Committee.

The agenda, together with supporting materials, will be distributed via email, webposting, or hard copy to School Committee members no less than four calendar days prior to the meeting to permit adequate time to prepare for the meeting.

Agendas will be posted and made available to the press, and others upon request.

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.

VOTING METHOD

Open meeting

Votes of the School Committee will be taken by voice vote or hand count and shall be recorded in the minutes. If the vote is unanimous only that fact need be recorded. No vote taken at an open session shall be by secret ballot.

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.

Executive Session

A majority of the members of the School Committee must vote to enter into executive session, with the vote taken by roll call and recorded in the official minutes.

All votes taken in executive session will be recorded roll call votes, and will become part of the minutes of executive sessions.

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. 30A:18-25; 71:42; 71:50

MINUTES

The minutes of a School Committee meeting constitute the written record of Committee actions; they are legal evidence of what the action was. Therefore, the secretary of the School Committee will be responsible for reporting in the minutes all actions taken by the Committee.

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.

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. 30A:22; 66:10
Town Charter and Bylaws

CROSS REF.: KDB, Public's Right to Know

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETINGS

File: BEDH

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

The School Committee desires members of the Natick Public Schools school community attend its meetings so that they may become better acquainted with the operations and the programs of the Natick Public Schools. In addition, the Committee would like the opportunity to hear the wishes and ideas of members of the Natick Public Schools school community on matters within the scope of their authority. These matters include the budget for the Natick Public Schools, the performance of the Superintendent, and the educational goals and policies of the Natick Public Schools.

In order that all who wish to be heard before the Committee have a chance, and to ensure the ability of the Committee to conduct the District's business in an orderly manner, the following rules and procedures are adopted consistent with state and federal free speech and assembly laws:

1. At the start of each regularly scheduled School Committee meeting, individuals or group representatives who have signed up to speak will be invited to address the Committee during its 15-minute public comment period, which shall be known as Public Speak. Public Speak shall occur prior to discussion of Agenda items, unless the Chair determines that there is a good reason for rearranging the order at a public meeting that is unrelated to deterring participation in Public Speak.
2. All speakers must conduct themselves in a peaceable and orderly manner. In addition, they are strongly encouraged to present their remarks in a respectful manner.
3. Speakers must begin their remarks by stating their name, town or city of residence, and affiliation if applicable. All remarks will be addressed through the Chair of the meeting.
4. Public Speak may concern items that are not on the School Committee's agenda, but which are within the scope of the School Committee's authority. Therefore, any comments involving staff members or students must concern the educational goals, policies, or budget of the Natick Public Schools, or the performance of the Superintendent.
5. Assuming that five (5) or fewer speakers sign up to engage in Public Speak each speaker will be allowed three (3) minutes each to present their material. If six (6) or more speakers sign up, then each speaker will be allowed two (2) minutes each. No more than seven (7) speakers will be accommodated at any individual meeting.
6. Speakers may not assign their time to another speaker, and in general, extensions of time will not be permitted. However, speakers who require reasonable accommodations on the basis of a speech-related disability or who require language of a speech-related disability or who require language

interpretation services may be allotted a total of five (5) minutes to present their material. Speakers must notify the School Committee by telephone or email at least two (2) business days in advance of the meeting if they wish to request an extension of time for one of these reasons.

7. The Chair of the meeting will not interrupt speakers who have been recognized to speak, except that the Chair reserves the right to terminate speech which is not Constitutionally protected because it constitutes a true threat of violence or incites imminent lawless conduct by others. Verbal comments will also be curtailed once they exceed the time limits outlined in paragraphs 5 and 6 of this policy and/ or to the extent they exceed the scope of the School Committee's authority.

8. In order to allow a peaceable and orderly meeting, no person may offer comment without permission of the Chair, and all persons shall, at the request of the Chair, be silent.

9. Disclaimer: Public Speak is not a time for debate or response to comments by the School Committee. Comments made at Public Speak do not reflect the views or the positions of the School Committee. Because of constitutional free speech principles, the School Committee does not have the authority to prevent all speech that may be upsetting and/ or offensive at Public Speak.

Revised Date: Revised/Approved on 3/24/2025

REFERENCES:

LEGAL REFS:

CROSS REF:

June 29, 2023 March 26, 2019

October 6, 2015

Barron v. Southborough, Natick Public Schools, ACLU letter to the Mass. Municipal Lawyers Assoc. and Mass. Assoc. of School Committees

M.G.L. 30A:18-25, Open Meeting Law

940 CMR 29 Open Meeting Regulations

BEC, Executive Sessions

1344990

SCHOOL COMMITTEE POLICY DEVELOPMENT

The School Committee will develop policies and put them in writing so that they may serve as guides for the discretionary action of those to whom it delegates authority.

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. Through the study and evaluation of reports concerning the execution of its policies, the School Committee will exercise its control over school operation.

The School Committee accepts the definition of policy set forth by the National School Boards Association:

Policies are principles adopted by a School Committee to chart a course of action. They tell what is wanted; they may include why and how much. Policies should be broad enough to indicate a line of action to be followed by the administration in meeting day- to-day problems, yet be specific enough to give clear guidance.

The policies of the School Committee are framed, and are meant to be interpreted, in terms of state law, regulations of the Massachusetts Board of Education, and other regulatory agencies of the various levels of government.

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 to the Committee in the following sequence: •

1. Information item - distribution with agenda
2. Discussion item - reading of the 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.

POLICY REVISION AND REVIEW

In an effort to keep its written policies up to date so that they can be used consistently as a basis for School Committee action and administrative decision, 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 is given the continuing commission of calling to the Committee's attention all policies that are out of date or for other reason appear to need revision.

The School Committee directs the Superintendent to periodically recall all policy and regulations manuals for administrative updating and Committee review.

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 official policy manual will be considered a public record and will be available for inspection at the Superintendent's office.

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.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE REVIEW OF PROCEDURES

It is expected that the Superintendent and administrative staff will need to issue procedures implementing policies of the School Committee. Many of these will be routine from year to year; others will arise in special circumstances; some will be drawn up under specific directions from the Committee.

The Committee may review the procedures 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 procedures only when, in the Committee's judgment, they are inconsistent with policies adopted by the Committee.

The Committee will not officially approve procedures 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.

Rules Pertaining to Staff and Student Conduct

Under Massachusetts law, 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 Dept. of Elementary and Secondary 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.

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

SCHOOL COMMITTEE-STAFF COMMUNICATIONS

The School Committee wishes to maintain open channels of communication between itself and the staff. The basic line of communication will, however, be through the Superintendent.

Staff Communications to the School Committee

All communications or reports to the Committee or any of its subcommittees from Principals, supervisors, teachers, or other staff members will be submitted through the Superintendent. This procedure does not deny the right of any employee to appeal to the Committee for administrative decisions on important matters, except those matters that are outside of the Committee's legal authority, provided the Superintendent has been notified of the forthcoming appeal and that it is processed in accordance with the Committee's policy on complaints and grievances. Staff members are also reminded that Committee meetings are public meetings. As such, they provide an excellent opportunity to observe first hand the Committee's deliberations on problems of staff concern.

School Committee Communications to Staff

All official communications, policies, and directives of staff interest and concern will be communicated to staff members 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

Individual 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. Such visits will be regarded as informal expressions of interest in school affairs and not as "inspections" or visits for supervisory or administrative purposes. Official visits by Committee members will be carried out only under Committee authorization.

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 containing public business 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, or the district shall provide district e-mail addresses, which are archived. These copies shall be retained by the central office in the same fashion as any other School Committee records.

LEGAL REF.: M.G.L.4:7; 30A:18-25, 23B; 66:10

NEW SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBER ORIENTATION

In accordance with the requirements of law, each new School Committee member elected to the 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.

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

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBER COMPENSATION AND EXPENSES

The School Committee shall serve without compensation, except by vote of the town meeting. No member of the Natick School Committee shall be eligible to the position of teacher, or Superintendent of the Natick 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.

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. 40:5; 71:52

CROSS REF.: BIBA, School Committee Conferences, Conventions, and Workshops

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. The recording secretary will maintain a calendar of School Committee conferences, conventions and workshops. 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 for 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 will be in accordance with the travel reimbursement policy.
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.

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

CROSS REFS.: BID, School Committee Member Compensation and Expenses
DKC, Expense Reimbursements

SCHOOL COMMITTEE LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

The School Committee, as an agent of the state, must operate within the bounds of state and federal laws affecting public education. If the Committee is to meet its responsibilities to the residents and students of this community, it must work vigorously for the passage of new laws designed to advance the cause of good schools and for the repeal or modification of existing laws that impede this cause.

To this end:

1. 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.
2. The Committee will work with its legislative representatives (both state and federal), 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.
3. 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.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIPS

The Committee may 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.