

Policy Subcommittee Meeting - 11/17/2020
Large Conference Room
9 Widger Road, Marblehead MA

Members: Sarah Gold, Emily Barron, John Buckey

Call to Order: 8:35am

Ms Gold asked for a motion to approve the minutes for 9/18/2020 and 10/9/2020

Dr Buckey made the motion.

Ms Barron seconded the motion.

The motion passed 3-0.

Ms Gold recognized Dr Jessica Benedetto, 8 Bradlee Road, as a guest presenter. Dr Benedetto requested to speak to the Policy Subcommittee on the topic of bussing in the district and Policy EEAA-Transportation of Regular Education Students. Dr Benedetto reported that she has two children in the school district, one is 8th grade and the other in 5th grade. Dr Benedetto requested that the bussing policy for the district be revised to include children whose primary route to school does not have adequate and safe sidewalk access. She also asked that the policy be revised to include children in K-12th grades.

Dr Benedetto pointed out that DESE defines the route to school as the “measurable distance to a commonly traveled route or public way that is accessible to pedestrian traffic. She pointed out that for the area of town she lives in, there is no crossing guard at the intersection of Schooner Ridge Road and Beacon Street. Dr Benedetto mentioned that it simply isn’t possible to add sidewalks in some of the areas that she is talking about.

Dr Benedetto informed the subcommittee that Lynn Public Schools provides bussing for students who live in areas where sidewalks are inaccessible and the Hamilton/Wenham School District does the same. She mentioned that some districts charge fees for residents who want to have their children bussed to school but do not meet the distance requirements. She added that the Salem School District charges fees for older students. She also noted that more bussing would cut down on car idling at school pickup.

Ms Gold asked Dr Buckey to look into whether the police could provide a crossing guard for the intersection of Schooner Ridge and Beacon Street. Ms Gold also noted that Dr Buckey and herself were in contact with Ms Crocker from Safe Routes to School and that the district could participate in the walking audit. Ms Gold discussed some of the previous conversations she had with residents and the commitment to understanding the options around bussing. Ms Gold noted that Michelle Cresta was going to look into the process and costs of increased bussing in the district and encouraged Dr Benedetto to work with Ms Cresta if she was interested.

Dr Buckey stated he would also reach out to the Superintendent’s Roundtable he participates in to see what other communities do to meet bussing needs.

Ms Barron noted that charging a fee for bussing is an interesting idea.

Dr Benedetto pointed out that there are State advocacy groups for environmentally sound busses.

Dr Buckey stated he would also work to get data on bussing from across the state.

The subcommittee thanked Dr Benedetto for the time she has devoted to this subject and for coming to talk with them.

Policy IB-Academic Freedom - it was noted that Ms Gold would ask Dorothy Presser about the addition of the reference to the Constitution of the United States and whether that was a necessary and helpful addition to the policy.

Policy IC/ICA-School Year & School Year Calendar - Dr Buckey noted that the May 1st date seemed late. Ms Gold pointed out that the calendar is a hot topic in this district and that it is recommended that a Superintendent's Advisory Committee be formed to look at the calendar and long term solutions to some of the problems that come up every year with holidays and continuity of the school year.

Policy ID-School Day - Change the final paragraph to read "Parents and guardians will be informed of the opening and closing times set by the Committee. To help insure the safety of all children, parents will also be notified that students will not be admitted into the school building until the start of the official day unless bus schedules require earlier admittance."

Policy IE-Organization of Instruction - It was noted that Nan Murphy should be asked about the structure of the levels and consistency in the curriculum instruction.

Policy IGA-Curriculum Development - no members expressed any questions or problems with this policy.

Ms Gold made the recommendation that the subcommittee also review the F policy section. Ms Barron and Dr Buckey agreed.

Adjournment at 9:29am.

Respectfully Submitted,
Sarah Gold, chairperson