

Canton School Committee
Protocols Workshop, August 15, 2023
Minutes

A. **Call to Order:** Chair O'Halloran called for a motion to convene the August 15, 2023 School Committee Operational Protocols Workshop at 4:17pm. Kimberly McCourt made the motion; Laura Arboleda seconded. The vote was unanimous at 3-0 and recorded as follows:

Kendall O'Halloran	yea
Kimberly McCourt	yea
Laura Arboleda	yea

3 yeas	0 nays
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Attendees:

Kendall O'Halloran
Kristian Merenda (arrived at 4:20pm)
Laura Arboleda
Kimberly McCourt
Derek Folan, Superintendent (arrived at 4:45pm)

Absent: Maureen Moran

Guest: Jim Hardy, MASC representative

B. **Workshop Topic: 2023/24 School Committee Operational Protocols:** Chair O'Halloran began by introducing Mr. Hardy and asked members for any feedback or suggestions for changes to the existing protocols document (approved September 23, 2022).

Discussion ensued regarding the correct chain of command for individual member requests for information. Members agreed that the individual will make the request through the Chair. If the request is made in private (outside an Open Session meeting), the Chair will survey each member and obtain a majority vote. It will be necessary for the Committee as a whole to agree that the request is relevant. If there is agreement, the Chair will then bring the request to the Superintendent who will take the lead on responding to the request. If the request is made during a School Committee Open Session meeting, the Chair will lead a vote as it must be addressed in that Open Session. Subsequently, the request could also be directed/assigned to a subcommittee for discussion. Once a resolution is determined, the chair of that subcommittee will bring it back to the Chair for full committee approval. A suggestion was made about initiating a "task tracker" for planning future agendas. Mr. Hardy suggested drawing up a year-long agenda. It was noted that this document is already in existence and can be found on the CPS website. A "Special Topics" form is also available to any School Committee members who might like a topic prioritized.

#2 Limits of the School Committee's Authority: it is denoted that the School Committee has "advising consent" on Superintendent recommendations. Recourse is to abstain as an individual member. An exception was voiced with the retention of a Public Relations firm as it relates to negotiations since that is a School Committee hire. Mr. Hardy cautioned about limits of a protocol document vs. a handbook as illustrated in Section B of the Policy Manual.

#3 How the Canton School Committee Conducts Its Business: discussion included:

- a. Adding a segment to written protocols about Public Comment to include individual time limits (5min) as well as a total time (30min) for Public Comment. Mr. Hardy advised consistency in application of the policy, including timing. Limit to 5 minutes. A suggestion was made that a timer be available to the individual at the final minute mark as a reminder that time is almost up. When allotted time is up, the commentator must withdraw from the space. Members agreed to keep the 5 minute limit for individual comments.
- b. Editing the bullet about building trust (4th bullet from bottom of page) to read: *We will build trust and show respect in all communications between and among School Committee members and the Superintendent, their leadership team, and staff, even in times of disagreement.*

#4 How The Canton School Committee Communicates: Members agreed to some changes (changes in highlighted italics):

- a. First bullet: The School Committee and the Superintendent recognize the importance of proactive communication and agree that there will be no surprises. If members have questions or concerns *on items not on the agenda*, they agree to contact the Superintendent well in advance of a meeting.
- b. Second bullet: strike: ~~Communication between the staff and the School Committee is encouraged.~~
- c. Fourth bullet: All personnel complaints and criticisms received by the School Committee or its individual members will be directed to the Superintendent *or the appropriate individual in the chain of command.*
- d. Fifth bullet: We will encourage others to follow the District ~~Line and~~ Staff Relations policy (CCB).
- e. There was an overall comment about engaging in the appropriate level of communication between staff and School Committee members. Recognize and speak with staff appropriately to humanize and communicate intent. Include recognizing the good things that are happening and specify "respect". Be aware of violating regulations of collective bargaining. Speak through representatives only.
- f. In an effort to make meetings more efficient and effective, members would like to enhance procedures for invited presenters. Modifications would include:
 - i. Invitations for presentations in Open Session will include expectations of topics. Specific topics should be clearly communicated by the School Committee, and presenters should speak directly to the topic requested—updates do not need to include a full history;

- ii. Presentations should be available to School Committee members in advance of the scheduled meeting to allow time to review and prepare questions (2 weeks?). Questions/comments from members will be sent back to the presenter in enough time to allow preparation for appropriate, knowledgeable answers. Questions to consider preparing for might include:
 - a. Impact on any specific policies;
 - b. Budgetary issues;
 - c. Changes that may be important to the School Committee;
 - d. School Committee members, instead of asking, "How can we help you?" might consider "What's the next step? Or "What's next for your program?" to avoid misunderstandings of funding, etc.

h. Members asked for availability of a clean copy of the new version of the document, "Operating Protocols" that includes spaces for signatures, prior to a proposed vote at an upcoming School Committee meeting. Members agreed to sign the final draft of Operating Protocols as a sign of their commitment to the standards addressed above.

#5. How the Canton School Committee Will Improve: in addition to the current document notations, members agreed to enter each meeting prepared by previewing documents for each meeting and having questions/comments/concerns ready.

#6. What Happens When Things Go Wrong: Changes to bullet #2 included: We recognize the importance of honoring our agreed upon operating protocols. *The Chair will take responsibility for reminding members when they are getting off-track.*

At 7:33 pm Chair O'Halloran asked for a motion to enter into Executive Session for the purpose of conducting contract negotiations with nonunion personnel - Superintendent - as an Open Meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the public body. Members will not return to Open Session. Laura Arboleda made the motion; Kristian Merenda seconded. Roll call vote ensued. It was unanimous and recorded as:

Kimberly McCourt	yea
Kristian Merenda	yea
Laura Arboleda	yea
Kendall O'Halloran	yea

4 yeas 0 nays.

Action Items:

1. Mr. Hardy will forward his "Guidelines for Presenters." These guidelines should be available to each presenter.
2. Ms. Hutchinson is requested to forward contact information for all School Committee members to each member.