

MINUTES OF OPEN MEETING

BOARD OF EDUCATION

PUTNAM VALLEY CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
146 PEEKSKILL HOLLOW ROAD
PUTNAM VALLEY, NEW YORK 10579

TIME: **Type of Meeting: Retreat/Special Business** **Date: July 21, 2010**
No. of Pages:5 **Meeting**

BOARD OF EDUCATION: President Valerie Fitzgerald **PRESENT**
Vice President Tina Mackay
Trustee Guy Cohen
Trustee Joseph Ferraro
Trustee Jeanine Rufo

ADMINISTRATORS: Dr. Marc Space, Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Barbara Fuchs, Assistant Superintendent
Mr. Paul Lee, Assistant Superintendent

(Dr. Fuchs and Mr. Lee joined the meeting at 5:05pm.)

OTHERS: PNW BOCES Superintendent Jim Langlois (Facilitator) &
PNW BOCES Asst. Superintendent John McCarthy
District Legal Counsel David Shaw (Joined the meeting at 5:22pm)

The meeting was opened by Ms. Fitzgerald at 1:05pm. **CONVENE MEETING**

The meeting was held on the campus of Putnam Northern Westchester BOCES. The Board began the meeting by reviewing the Retreat agenda (attached to the official minutes of this meeting).

It was noted that the Board's relationship with the superintendent is key as to how the Board operates. During the discussion on the topic of the Board's self-evaluation, it was noted that the Board has not had a formal self-evaluation recently. The Board completed the self-evaluation form (attached to the minutes of this meeting) which was developed during the past school year. The form summarized what the Board does well and what the Board can do better.

During this discussion, the Board members noted the following:

Ms. Rufo noted that she felt communication was handled effectively but how the Board responds to concerns that are not agenda items could be done better.

Ms. Fitzgerald noted that Board meetings and public contribution was handled effectively by the Board but the Board's response to questions could be handled better.

Mr. Ferraro stated that he felt the budget was handled effectively by the Board but that the Board appeared to not be engaged and were more concerned about the process.

Ms. Mackay noted that she felt the Board was effective in their planning and Board responsibilities and could do better with the decision process and independent thought process.

Mr. Cohen stated the he felt the Board was effective regarding communication with the community and with input from the community, but noted that they did not always function as a Board.

Dr. Space noted that he felt the Board was effective with their responsibilities but could do better with their relationship with the Superintendent by discussing their feelings openly.

The Board and Dr. Space reviewed the meeting handouts (attached to the official minutes of this meeting).

The next item discussed related to the meetings of the Board of Education. The standard model of two meetings per month, Work Session and Business Meeting, was discussed. It was noted that the process for "normal" decisions is a month long. There was discussion as to whether the Board should have a time limit for meetings and discussions. It was noted that the time limit would enable the community to know when they would have an open comment session.

Setting of agenda items was discussed. Topics for upcoming months are adjusted at end of each meeting for the running master planning calendar. It was noted that the agenda process needs to be formalized.

Preparing for meetings: It was noted that if there are questions based on agenda items, Board should ask their questions prior to the meeting so the leadership team will be prepared to respond. The information needs to be shared with the entire Board. Mr. Ferraro noted that the Board should re-ask the question at the meeting so the community is aware of the work.

Discussion took place regarding presentations. It was noted that some presentations should be sent to the Board prior to the meeting, presentations should have time limits and presentations which the Board must act on should be presented at the Work Session and acted on at the following Business

It was noted as a reminder that a meeting of three or more Board members is considered an official meeting and also that Board members must be careful with respect to email. Email cannot be used to conduct business, only to gather information. Emails can be obtained under the Freedom of Information Law. It was also noted that the Board should review the open meeting laws annually.

The public comment portion of meetings was discussed. It was noted that the Board President or Superintendent should handle the comments and possibly follow-up on all questions raised at the end of the meeting or at the next Board meeting. It was noted that the public comment portion of the meeting should not be a conversation. It was also noted that the Board must remember that they are not the problem solvers and that each Board member is a Trustee and represents all stakeholders and not only those who elected them. It was stated that the primary responsibility of the Board is the educational enterprise of the community. It was also noted that consensus is important and does not represent unanimity. Once an item is adopted, the Board members should not publicize any disapproval. The Board's goal should be consensus.

The Board members discussed participation in activities outside of meetings. It was noted that the Board's presence at events is important. It was noted that the Board should have conversations about who will attend/participate at events. The Superintendent of Schools should know if a Board member is in any school building. (It was noted that school law notes that Board members must visit schools.) Discussion ensued regarding membership in various school organizations such as the PTA. Also discussed was involvement in educational organizations outside of the District (such as the Westchester Putnam School Boards' Association). It was noted that Board members need to share what they have learned from these organizations at Board meetings. It was also noted that Board members must be active and know the legislative representatives at all levels.

It was noted that clear charges and responsibilities must be given to the District's committees (audit, policy, budget, etc.). The term ad hoc or task force could be used if a committee is given a single charge. All members of the committee, ad hoc group or task force should know at the start of their meetings if they are giving a recommendation or actually making a decision.

The Board discussed operating protocol as it relates to their decisions and discussions. It was noted that Board members should not express opinions during communications outside of Board meetings. It was noted that information should be exchanged, not opinions, and that all business must be conducted at a Board meeting.

Protocol on how the Board should communicate with the Superintendent, building administrators and teachers was discussed. It was noted that the Board President should be the facilitator and that the President should then share the information with all the Board members.

It was noted that the Board must remember that the Board is a corporate body and that the Superintendent is an ex-officio of the Board and the Board should not meet without the Superintendent unless the Board is evaluating the Superintendent. The Board President should facilitate the priority of the requests from the Board members. It was noted that for communication with the community the Board should go through the Superintendent when possible.

The characteristics of an effective Board member were discussed (attached to the official minutes of this meeting). During the discussions, it was noted that the education and educational outcomes of children must remain the focus of the Board and that the school must be anchored in their community. It was also noted that the Board must deal openly with conflict, communication should be constant and that there needs to be expectations and evaluations for the Superintendent and the Board.

There was discussion related to various situations that can arise for Board members (listing attached to the official minutes of this meeting entitled "How Do You Handle..."). It was noted that Board members can note their opinions on various issues during the open public comment section of a meeting, the Board President should handle inflammatory or inaccurate comments, parent and staff complaints should follow the chain of command. (However, it was noted that when complaints need to be anonymous, they can be brought to the Superintendent). Regarding complaints--it was noted that one should not overreact but must not ignore either and that the most important tool is conversation. During the discussion on expectations, it was noted that Board members are trustees and do not represent one group. It was noted that information discussed during Executive Session is considered confidential forever. The need for information was discussed and it was noted that a Board member should ask for the needed information prior to a meeting but it should be shared with all. Also noted was that anonymous information is a source but has less weight than information gained through an identified staff member or parent.

A discussion regarding decisions than took place (handout attached to the official minutes of this meeting entitled "Whose Decision?" Various samples of possible decisions (including but not limited to closing of school, tenure, administrator selections, new courses, tax rate, reading lists, etc.) were discussed and how they related to the decision making document.

School district leadership was discussed. It was noted that the Board needs to be focused on end results and the Superintendent must focus on how the District gets to the anticipated results. It was also noted that the Board needs to review Board and Superintendent governance and responsibilities. Also noted was the fact that the Board needs to examine the year-long process of the Superintendent's evaluation which is based on a collection of information and set goals. It was noted that there should be a mid-term review. It was also noted that the Superintendent evaluation template must be made available to the public by September 10th of each year.

BOCES Superintendent noted that the Board sets policies recommended by the Superintendent and that the Superintendent implements the rules and procedures in accord with the policies to execute those policies.

At 5:01pm, Mr. Langlois and Mr. McCarthy left the meeting. The Assistant Superintendents, Fuchs and Lee, joined the meeting at 5:05pm and the District legal counsel, David Shaw, joined the meeting at 5:22pm.

On motion by Mr. Cohen, seconded by Ms. Mackay, the Board moved into an Executive Session at 5:22pm to discuss collective negotiations pursuant to Article 14 of the Civil Service Law (the Taylor Law).
Motion carried unanimously.

CONVENE
EXECUTIVE SESSION
#45/11

On motion by Mr. Cohen, seconded by Ms. Fitzgerald, the Board moved out of Executive Session at 6:54pm. Motion carried unanimously.

ADJOURN
EXECUTIVE SESSION
#46/11

On motion by Ms. Mackay, seconded by Ms. Rufo, there being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:55pm. Motion carried unanimously.

ADJOURN MEETING
#47/11

Submitted by: Trustee Guy Cohen

Typed by: District Clerk Maureen Bellino