

UNION #28 JOINT SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE
Monday, March 21, 2022
Final Minutes

Present: Barbara Doyle, Anna Wetherby, Elizabeth Devlin, Katie McLaughlin, Johanna Bartlett, Lauren Thomas-Paquin, Dan Hayes, Melinda Hazen, Miriam Warner, Katelyn Mailloux-Little, Members; Craig Cohen, Chair; Caitlin Sheridan, Director of Finance and Operations; Corrina Wcislo, Director of Student Support Services; Jennifer Culkeen, Superintendent; Glenn Koocher, MASC Executive Director; Public Guests.

- 1. Meeting Called to Order by Craig at 7:30 P.M.**
- 2. Public Hearing: None.**
- 3. Approval of the Minutes from January 10, 2022:**

DAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF JANUARY 10, 2022. BARBARA SECONDED. VOICE VOTES MOTION ALL AYE.

4. New Business:

1. MASC Executive Director, Glenn Koocher - Presentation - School Committee Duties and Responsibilities:

Craig invited Glenn to speak prior to the establishment of a quorum. Glenn explained he was here to explain SC member duties and responsibilities. There are legal, governmental, and fiduciary aspects to the SC's role. An SC is a legislative body for education in a region, city, or town. It determines operating rules and procedures, establishes rules for the school district, conducts research to facilitate informed policymaking, hires the chief executive, sets the budget process and approves expenditures, and undertakes special duties set by state law. All documents generated by SC members (including emails) are public documents, and SC members are public figures legally and practically, and should expect that they might receive treatment from members of the public as such. The Chair of a meeting is the servant of the legislative body, and not the master. Chairs need to protect the privacy of school community members during public meetings.

Other duties include: responding to constituents, limited additional hiring responsibilities, goal setting and strategic planning, setting district policies, reviewing School Improvement Plans, and serve as the employer of record for collective bargaining and retaining legal counsel. SCs also advise and consent on certain personnel: Assistant/Associate/Deputy Superintendents, School Business Manager, Special Education Director, and Physicians, Nurses, and Attendance Officers.

The law provides no detailed delineation between policy making and administration in many cases, so SCs need to consult with legal counsel to determine their role about these. There are some clear ways to decide whether something is policy and not administration, however. Glenn invited SC members to share examples of where SCs and Superintendents have disagreed over authority or roles. Glenn discussed several examples, including controversies over the teaching of "Critical Race Theory" (in reality, teaching students about the differential impacts of racist policies on American individuals and communities with different ethnic backgrounds). Glenn noted that SC meetings can be the place where views are shared, since the state constitution gives everyone the right to address SCs. There are some areas where SCs must be careful, such as giving directives to Superintendents or staff, or intervening in hiring of educators, or exempting or excepting individuals from policies. He cautioned members to exercise caution when having conversations with others that might be misinterpreted. SCs should refer complaints and concerns to the Superintendent, respecting the chain of command.

Craig recommended that SC members reach out to Glenn when they have questions about particular concerns. SC members thanked Glenn for his informative presentation.

2. Substitute Pay - Discussion and Possible Vote:

Jennifer explained that we've been having difficulty finding substitute teachers, in part because of the pandemic, but also because of our pay rates, which are very low for the area (and not near the \$15/hr minimum wage). She is proposing that U#28 schools raise their substitute teacher rates to the same levels so as not to compete with each other. Craig asked whether these higher rates were figured into the budgets for next year. Caitlin said that having someone in the room with our kids is a priority, at the end of the day. Jennifer thanked Pam for her peerless help in researching this issue.

DAN MOVED TO RAISE THE DAY SUBSTITUTE RATES TO \$120 FOR A TEACHER, \$100 FOR A PARAEDUCATOR, AND \$175 FOR A NURSE. BARBARA SECONDED. VOICE VOTES ALL AYE. UNANIMOUS.

5. Old Business:

1. Discussion to amend the U28 By-Laws Article XV- Apportionment to Towns - Proposal to adopt a 5-year rolling average for U28 percent of expenses rather than single year over year enrollment - Next Steps needed:

Craig explained that JSC has been discussing the switch to a 5-year rolling average for U28 expenses for each Town. Jennifer outlined the next steps: individual SCs have to discuss the proposal, then it has to come back to JSC for an initial vote, then a second vote. All SC members need two weeks' notice for amendment of the bylaws as well. A 2/3 majority of all voting members (all SC members) is required to amend the Bylaws. Dan asked about the details being considered so far, and Caitlin presented them. Two variables govern the allocation projections: historical budget data and enrollment. She has projected several options: increasing to a 5-year rolling average one year at a time, and increasing in 2-, 4-, and 5-year steps.

DAN MOVED TO RECOMMEND THAT THE U#28 BYLAWS BE AMENDED TO MOVE TO A 5-YEAR ROLLING AVERAGE, BUILDING TOWARDS THE 5-YEAR AVERAGE ONE YEAR AT A TIME MOVING FORWARD. JOHANNA SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

Jennifer noted that the Bylaws do not permit a vote tonight to make this decision. Dan amended his motion to make it a recommendation of JSC, and not an actual amendment of the Bylaws. Dan proposed holding a Special Meeting to conduct the voting on the Bylaw change.

2. Union #28 Efficiencies - Discussion Continued:

Jennifer reported we did not get the grant from the state that would pay for a study to identify and make recommendations about improving efficiencies, since U#28 is not a single school district. The U#28 Towns could all apply for the grant, however. Jennifer said it would be nice to have one unified U#28 Policy Committee, since we all use the MASC policy templates anyway. JSC discussed the advantages of this: each individual SC would still vote to adopt policies that came out of the Policy Committee, for example.

6. Budget and Personnel Committee: No report.

7. Superintendent Report:

1. Mid-Cycle Review of Goals:

Jennifer reported on progress toward her three goals shared with the Leadership Team. She is meeting benchmarks in all three goals.

8. Director of Finance and Operations Report:

Caitlin reported that we're working on passing budgets in each town for next year. She was able to attend a two-day state conference and training session on municipal finance, which has helped her understand the other side of the budgeting process. There are upcoming end-of-year audits for three Towns.

9. News/Updates from Each School and Union #28:

Wendell/New Salem: No report.

Leverett: Craig noted that LES has been shocked by the loss of a 6th Grade student; the whole community is in mourning. A freeze burst the sprinkler system, creating a huge flood and effectively erasing February break. We're working out how to tie the Anti-Racist Commitment into the budget. The goal is to follow and grow it going forward.

Shutesbury: Dan said SES is applying for an MSBA grant to replace the school's roof, one that we've been denied several times over. The roof is leaking and needs to be replaced.

Erving: No report.

10. Future Items to Discuss:

- Next Meeting Date: May 16, 2022

11. Adjournment at 8:24

DAN MOVED TO ADJOURN. CRAIG SECONDED. VOICE VOTES ALL AYE. UNANIMOUS.