

## **SCHOOL COMMITTEE OPERATIONAL GOALS**

The Mansfield 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.

In accordance with these principles, the School Committee will:

1. Periodically set goals and performance objectives for itself and evaluate its accomplishments.
2. Set objectives for performance for each position and function in the system.
3. Allow the people responsible for carrying out objectives to have a role in setting them.
4. Conduct a concrete and periodic review of performance against these goals.

CROSS REF.: ADA School District Goals and Objectives

**EVALUATION OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES**

The Mansfield School Committee shall review the effectiveness of its internal operations at as necessary. The participation of the Superintendent and others who work regularly with the School Committee is welcome and encouraged.

## SCHOOL COMMITTEE LEGAL STATUS

State law provides that:

Every town at its annual meeting shall in every year when the term of office of any incumbent expires, and except when other provision is made by law, choose by ballot from its registered voters the following town officers for the following terms of office:

. . . Three, five, six, seven or nine members of the School Committee for terms of three years .  
..

The School Committee is the governing board of the town's public school system. Although its 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.

Established by law

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  
Mansfield Town Charter

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

## **SCHOOL COMMITTEE POWERS AND DUTIES**

The Mansfield 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 policy making. 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.

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 MEMBER AUTHORITY**

Because all powers of a School Committee lie in its action as a group, individual Committee members exercise their authority over district affairs only as they vote to take action at a legal meeting of the School Committee.

In other instances, an individual Committee member, including the Chairman, shall have power only when the School Committee, by vote, has delegated authority to him or her.

It shall be the policy of the School Committee to make its members, the district staff, and the public aware that only the School Committee has authority to take official action.

## **TERMS OF OFFICE**

1. The Mansfield School Committee is composed of five members.
2. Provision is made in state law for increasing or reducing the number of members of the School Committee.
3. The term of office is three years.
4. In every year when the term of office of a School Committee member expires, the town at its annual town meeting shall hold an election for that office.
5. An incumbent, as any other registered voter, may file for candidacy for School Committee.
6. Insofar as possible, one-third (two) of the members shall be elected annually.
7. A School Committee member begins his/her term of office as soon after the election as he/she is sworn in.
8. A School Committee member holds office for the term fixed by law and until another person is qualified in his/her stead.

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. 41:1, 2 and 107

## **REMOVAL OF COMMITTEE OFFICERS**

Any officer of the Committee may be removed for cause by a vote of four-fifths of the members at the regular meeting subsequent to the proposal.

REF.: *Roberts Rules of Order*

## **TERMINATION OF OFFICE AND FILLING VACANCIES**

1. An existing School Committee member terminates his/her duties upon the qualification of the newly elected or appointed member to the School Committee.
2. A vacancy on the School Committee may occur for a number of reasons: Failure of a town meeting to elect a member, resignation, moving out-of-town, vacating the office, death, or removal from office.
  - a. Resignation from the School Committee is by letter to the Town Clerk. It is the duty of the Town Clerk to inform the remaining School Committee members as well as the executive officers of the town of the receipt of a resignation.
  - b. If there is a vacancy on the School Committee, the remaining members will give written notice thereof, within one month of said vacancy, to the selectmen, who, with the remaining members shall, after one week's notice, fill such vacancy by ballot roll call. The selectmen shall fill such vacancy if the School Committee fails to give notice within the time as specified. A majority of the officers entitled to vote shall be necessary for such election.
  - c. A person who has been appointed to fill a vacancy in the membership of the School Committee terminates his/her duties at the time of the next annual meeting or when another member is qualified.
3. If a School Committee member serves as a consequence of a vote by the town to increase the membership on the School Committee, he/she will terminate his/her duties according to the tenure of the class to which he/she was chosen; that is, a member chosen to one, two, or three-year class terminates his/her duties at the end of one, two, or three years respectively.

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. 41:2, 41:109, 41:11

## **CODE OF ETHICS: SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

The acceptance of a code of ethics implies the understanding of the basic organization of School Committees under the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The oath of office of a School Committee member binds the individual member to adherence to those state laws which apply to School Committees since School Committee are agencies of the state.

1. A School Committee member in his/her relations with his/her community should:
  - a. Realize that his/her primary responsibility is to the children.
  - b. Recognize that his/her basic function is to the policy making and not administrative.
  - c. Remember that he/she is one of a team and must abide by, and carry out, all Committee decisions once they are made.
  - d. Be well informed concerning the duties of a Committee member on both a local and state level.
  - e. Remember that he/she represents the entire community at all times.
  - f. Accept the office as a Committee member as a means of unselfish service with no intent to "play politics," in any sense of the word, or to benefit personally from his/her Committee activities.
  
2. A School Committee member in his/her relations with his/her school administration should:
  - a. Endeavor to establish sound, clearly defined policies which will direct and support the administration.
  - b. Recognize and support the administrative chain of command and refuse to act on complaints as an individual outside the administration.
  - c. Act only on the recommendations of the chief administrator in all matters of employment or dismissal of school personnel.
  - d. Give the chief administrator full responsibility for discharging his/her professional duties and hold him/her responsible for acceptable results.
  - e. Refer all complaints to the administrative staff for solution and only discuss them at Committee meetings if such solutions fail.

3. A School Committee member in his/her relations with his/her fellow Committee members should:
  - a. Recognize that action at official meetings is binding and that he/she alone cannot bind the Committee outside of such meetings.
  - b. Realize that he/she should not make statements or promises of how he/she will vote on matters that will come before the Committee.
  - c. Uphold the intent of executive sessions and respect the privilege communication that exists in executive sessions.
  - d. Not withhold pertinent information on school matters or personnel problems either from members of his/her own Committee or from members of other Committees who may be seeking help and information on school problems.
  - e. Make decisions only after all facts on a question have been presented and discussed.

## **CONFLICT OF INTEREST AVOIDANCE**

Members of the Mansfield School Committee and employees of the public schools are subject to the provisions of the "conflict of interest" statute. Chapter 268A of the General Laws of the Commonwealth. The statute prohibits any member of the School Committee from:

1. Receiving or seeking anything of value in return for influence over official actions.
2. Requiring bidders on building or construction contracts to deal with any particular insurance agency.
3. Except under provisions for "special municipal employees" representing anyone other than the town in matters involving the town or receiving any compensation other than official salary for matters involving the town. Members of the School Committee are classified "special municipal employees".
4. Participating in any matter in which he/she, his/her partner or his/her immediate family have a financial interest (Immediate family includes the employee and his/her spouse and their parents, children, brothers and sisters.)
5. Except under provisions for "special municipal employees", having a financial interest in a contract which he/she knows about or has reason to know about made by any municipal agency of the town.
6. Accepting any employment which will impair his/her independence of judgment in the exercise of his/her official duties or which will require disclosure of confidential information gained by reason of his/her official position..
7. Disclosing confidential, official information improperly or to further personal interests.
8. Using or attempting to use his/her official position to secure unwarranted privileges or exemptions for himself or others or giving the appearance of such action.
9. Giving by his/her conduct reasonable basis for the impression that any person can improperly influence him/her or unduly enjoy; his/her favor in the performance of his/her official duties, or that he/she is unduly affected by the kinship, rank, position or influence of any part or person.
- 10.. Pursuing a course of conduct which will raise suspicion among the public that he/she is likely to be engaged in violation of his/her trust.

LEGAL REF.: M.G.L. 268A

**PROHIBITION AGAINST ACCEPTING EMPLOYMENT FEE**

1. An employee or School Committee member may not accept any commission, fee, compensation or reward of any kind for obtaining employment for another person in the Mansfield Public Schools.
2. Infraction of this policy by an employee may result in the dismissal of the employee. Infraction of this policy by a School Committee member will result in official censure by the Mansfield School Committee.

## **ANNUAL MEETING FOR ORGANIZATION**

The annual meeting for organization will be held at the first meeting of the School Committee following the annual town elections.

1. Notice of the meeting is filed with the town clerk and is posted on the official town bulletin at least forty-eight hours before the meeting, not including Sundays and legal holidays.
2. The Superintendent of Schools will conduct the meeting during the election of the new Chairman and Vice Chairman.
3. The initial item of business at the meeting for organization will be the election of the following officers for the coming year: Chairman and Vice Chairman. A majority of the votes of the whole Committee shall be necessary for election of officers.
4. After the election of officers, the Mansfield School Committee may proceed to other items on the agenda.

## **SCHOOL COMMITTEE OFFICERS**

The Chairman of the Mansfield School Committee shall preside at all meetings of the Committee. In the absence of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, the School Committee shall be called to order by the secretary, but no business shall be transacted until a Chairman pro tem has been chosen.

The following, in general, are the duties of the Chairman of the School Committee:

1. To call the meeting to order at the appropriate time.
2. To preside at all meetings. "Presiding" includes:
  - Announcing the order of business
  - Stating and putting to a vote all questions regularly moved
  - Allowing for adequate discussion and debate on all matters which properly come before the Committee
  - Enforcing the observance of order and decorum
  - Announcing the result of any vote taken
  - Subject to appeal, deciding all questions of order and procedure
3. To authenticate, by his/her signature, when necessary, all of the acts, orders and proceedings of the School Committee.
4. To represent and stand for the School Committee, declaring its will and in all things obeying its decisions.

The Vice Chairman will perform the above duties in the absence of the Chairman.

The secretary will keep, or cause to be kept, an accurate journal of all Committee meetings, will comply with state law and Committee policy regarding notification of meetings, and will render such reports as may be required by the state or the town.

## **APPOINTED COMMITTEE OFFICIALS**

The Mansfield School Committee shall employ a Superintendent of Schools who shall serve as executive officer of, and secretary to the Committee. Under the direction of the Committee, the Superintendent shall administrate and supervise the public schools of the town. He/she shall perform such other duties as the Committee may from time to time direct and as are required by law.

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L., 71: 36, 71:59

## **SCHOOL COMMITTEE-SUPERINTENDENT RELATIONSHIP**

The legislation of policies is the most important function of the School Committee. The execution of those policies is the function of the Superintendent.

Delegation by the School Committee of its executive powers to the Superintendent provides freedom for the Superintendent to manage the schools within the School Committee's policies and frees the School Committee to devote its time to policy-making and appraisal functions.

The School Committee holds the Superintendent responsible for the administration of its policies, the execution of School Committee decisions, the daily operation of school system and for keeping the School Committee informed about school operations and problems.

The School Committee shall strive to procure, when a vacancy exists, the best professional leader available for the head administrative post. Then the School Committee as a whole, and individual members, shall:

1. Give the Superintendent full administrative authority for properly discharging his/her professional duties, holding him/her responsible for acceptable results.
2. Hold all meetings of the School Committee in the presence of the Superintendent except when his/her contract and salary are under consideration.
3. Refer all complaints to the Superintendent and discuss them only at a regular meeting after failure of administrative solution.
4. Strive to provide adequate safeguards around the Superintendent and other staff members to the end that they can live happily and comfortably in the community and discharge their educational functions on a thoroughly professional basis.
5. Present personal criticisms of any employee directly to the Superintendent.

## **SUBCOMMITTEES**

Subcommittees of the Mansfield School Committee will be authorized on an annual basis as noted. New subcommittees may be authorized by a four-fifths vote of the School Committee. Subcommittees may advise the Committee, but may not determine policy.

## **ADVISORY COMMITTEES**

1. Recognizing the importance of community participation and the need for advice from community participants, the School Committee may from time to time appoint advisory committees to assist the Committee in accomplishing specific tasks.
  - A. The School Committee may support the work of a Citizens Advisory Committee by authorizing the use of school system personnel, permitting the use of outside paid consultants, and underwriting other expenses.
  - B. A Citizens Advisory Committee should be given its charge in writing.
  - C. A Citizens Advisory Committee has only two responsibilities: To study the problem and to make recommendations to the School Committee. The recommendations of a Citizens Advisory Committee are "advisory" in nature and are not binding
  - D. The Advisory Committee will be formulated using the following principles:
    - (1) Advisory committees will be formulated to meet specific goals and objectives and/or to meet federal and state requirements.
    - (2) Members will normally be appointed for a term specified by the School Committee.
    - (3) Advisory committees may be dissolved by the School Committee at its discretion.
    - (4) Upon establishment of an advisory committee, the functions and duties of said committee will be written and approved by the School Committee.
    - (5) Advisory committee members for educational programs will be appointed on the basis of qualifications and experience in the fields concerned with the specific program whenever possible.
    - (6) Wherever possible and appropriate, memberships of individual advisory committees will be representatives of the community.
2. The Mansfield School Committee will meet at least once every other month (during the months school is in session) with a five-member Student Advisory Committee elected by students of the high school.

LEGAL REF.: M.G.L. 71:38M

## 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 school council and submitted for approval to the Superintendent and 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 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 and the Mansfield School Committee for review and approval by October 1st of each year.

Because the implementation of the plan is dependent on School Committee approval, it is important that the school council be aware of certain expectations of the School Committee 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.
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 and School Committee, 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 school improvement plan is not reviewed by the School Committee within 30 days of its receipt by the Committee, the plan shall be deemed to have been approved.

## **CONDUCT OF SCHOOL COUNCIL BUSINESS**

The Principal shall, by law, serve as co-chairman of the council. The second co-chairman 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.

Consensus shall be used by school councils as the primary method to resolve issues and to formulate recommendations. Votes by majority may be taken at the discretion of the Principal and Roberts Rules of Order shall prevail if there are questions of procedure.

All meetings of the school council shall conform to the Open Meeting Law, Section 23 A, B, and C, 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 for information.

## **REPRESENTATION ON EXTERNAL COMMITTEES**

The Mansfield School Committee may appoint its members or its designee to represent it on committees and for functions and activities of other organizations and groups.

1. Members may be appointed to external committees or functions at the meeting for organization or at any time during the year it becomes desirable to do so.
2. An appointee should express the interests of the School Committee and be an information source for the School Committee.
3. On the basis of his/her experience as a representative to an external group, the member may propose recommendations to the School Committee, but he/she may not take any action which binds the School Committee.

**SERVICES OF LEGAL COUNSEL FOR GENERAL PURPOSES  
AND COLLECTIVE BARGAINING**

1. General Purposes

Subject to acceptance of the provisions of the law, the Mansfield School Committee may employ legal counsel for the general purposes of the Committee from funds appropriated for school purposes. The following are among the general duties of legal counsel with reference to educational matters:

- a. To advise and furnish the School Committee legal opinions, verbally and in writing, as directed, on all matters and questions of law, including interpretations of old and new statutes.
- b. To attend School Committee meetings at the request of the School Committee.
- c. To prepare legal instruments and contracts, including resolutions, advertising bids and all other legal papers as directed by the School Committee.
- d. When needed, to commence and prosecute all legal action brought by the School Committee.
- e. To represent and defend the School Committee in any legal action against them which has arisen from the carrying out of regular responsibilities and the performance of regular duties.

2. Collective Bargaining

The Mansfield School Committee may employ legal counsel in connection with collective bargaining with employee organizations for school employees and may spend up to \$25,000 from funds appropriated for school purposes. However the School Committee may not spend more than the designated amount for counsel for collective bargaining without prior approval of the Board of Selectmen.<sup>3</sup>

LEGAL REF.: M.G.L., 71: 37F

## **PROFESSIONAL AND CONSULTANT SERVICES**

1. On the recommendation of the Superintendent, the School Committee may appoint or retain persons to provide consulting or other professional services to the School District. Consulting services may be either on a per diem or contractual basis.
2. Consultants shall have no administrative authority over any facet of the District's schools, but shall act solely as advisors to the School Committee and its officers and employees.
3. Consulting services may be provided from professions other than education as well as from the educational profession.

## **SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

1. The School Committee shall transact all business at a legal meeting of the Committee. No member of the Committee shall have power to act in the name of the Committee outside of Committee meeting.
2. Except during July and August (when meetings are held as needed), the School Committee will hold its regular meetings on the first and third Tuesdays of each month unless modified by the School Committee.
3. Designated places for all meetings of the Committee shall be stated in the notice of the meeting.
4. Except in an emergency, a notice of every meeting of the School Committee shall be filed with the town clerk and posted on the Principal official bulletin board of the town at least 48 hours (including Saturdays, but not Sundays and legal holidays) prior to such meeting.
5. Any legal meeting of the Committee may be adjourned to a specific time and place. Only items on the agenda of the meeting adjourned may be acted upon at the adjourned meeting.
6. All meetings (except when the School Committee is in executive session) are open to the public and the press.

LEGAL REF.: M.G.L., 39:23B

## **SPECIAL AND EMERGENCY MEETINGS**

1. A special meeting of the Mansfield School Committee may be called by the Chairman, or any two members, by serving on the other members a notice of the time and place of meeting at least 48 hours before the hour of meeting. Said notice shall indicate the reason for holding such special meeting; no other business shall be transacted, except upon the unanimous vote of the Committee.
2. Procedures for publicizing and conducting special meetings shall be the same as those used for regular meetings except as noted in paragraph 1.
3. In case of the need for an emergency meeting, the law recognizes that it may not be possible to follow the procedures for notice and posting. ("Emergency" is designated as "a sudden, generally unexpected occurrence or set of circumstances demanding immediate action.")

LEGAL REF.: M.G.L., 39:23B

## **EXECUTIVE SESSIONS**

All meetings of the Mansfield 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 Chairman (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 Chairman 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.
2. The discipline or dismissal, including the hearing of charges against, a member of the Committee, a school department employee or student, or other individual.
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 (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 affect in obtaining qualified applicants.
9. To meet or confer with a mediator with respect to any litigation or public business.

(In the first two cases listed, 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 once each year.

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. 39:23A; 39:23B

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

## MEETING PROCEDURES

1. As needed, Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised will be used as a guide for parliamentary procedure. A vote of four-fifths of the members of the School Committee is needed to change a particular rule out of Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised.
2. All appropriate background material and agenda will be given to the press to assist them in following the discussion and action on agenda items.
3. The Chairman shall stop any discussion which does not apply to the motion last made. He/she may also stop the discussion of a matter if the Committee has previously agreed to confine discussion to a definite period of time, and that period has expired. Aside from such limitation, the Chairman shall not interfere with debate as long as a member wishes to speak.
4. The Chairman may give visitors who have not presented a written request an opportunity to address the Committee.
5. No person may address the School Committee meeting without the permission of the Chairman. Under provisions of the law, a person who persists in disorderly behavior can be removed from the meeting.

LEGAL REF.: M.G.L., 39:23C

### **AGENDA PREPARATION AND DISTRIBUTION**

1. The agenda shall be prepared by the Superintendent with the approval of the Chairman of the School Committee.
2. Placement of items on the agenda for meetings Tuesday evening must be in the Superintendent's office by noon the previous Thursday. (The Chairman will accept items not on the agenda only under "Other Business.")
3. The agenda for regular evening meetings (including suggested resolutions, reports, and necessary background information) will be delivered so that School Committee members receive the material at least seventy-two hours prior to the meeting.
4. To the extent possible, the Superintendent will endeavor to provide agenda and materials to members in the same relative time framework for special and emergency meetings.

## ORDER OF BUSINESS

1. The general pattern for the "Order of Business" for a regular School Committee meeting is:
  - a) Pledge of Allegiance
  - b) Communications
  - c) Approve minutes of previous meeting(s)
  - d) Comments from the public
  - e) Superintendent's Report
    1. Appointments
    2. Reports
  - f) Finance and Operations
  - g) Old Business
  - h) New Business
  - i) Other Business
  - j) Adjournment
2. In general, the agenda will include all business to come before the Committee. At the completion of the agenda, the Chairman will call for any other unforeseen business that the Committee or Superintendent considers urgent. The Committee member or Superintendent will briefly state the nature of the business and upon majority vote of the Committee will either discuss or postpone the item to a future meeting.
3. The School Committee may move into executive session in accordance with provisions of the law at any time during a School Committee meeting.

### **ADJOURNMENT TIME FOR MEETINGS**

1. The Mansfield School Committee seeks to adjourn each meeting no later than 11:00 p.m.
2. Business which is "unfinished" at that time may be placed on the agenda of the next regular or special meeting of the School Committee.
3. This statement of desired adjournment time in no way affects the validity of formal action taken after 11:00 p.m. should the School Committee be unaware of or choose to ignore the passage of time.

## QUORUM AND VOTING

1. The quorum for calling a meeting to order and for the transaction of business shall be a majority (three members) of the Committee, but a number less than the majority may adjourn a meeting.<sup>1</sup> (i.e., If only one or two members remain in a meeting, they may adjourn the meeting.)
2. A motion is out of order while another motion is being discussed, unless it is an amendment to the motion under consideration. Exceptions are the motion to adjourn, motion to table a previous motion, motion to refer the motion being discussed, and the motion to vote immediately (on the previous question); these are always in order.
3. All voting at Mansfield School Committee meetings must be by voice or roll call vote and no secret ballot shall be used. Votes relayed by telephone or written votes by absent members are not valid.
4. The Chairman shall not wait for discussion of motions if no discussion is readily forthcoming, but shall proceed to call the vote. All members should vote, including the Chairman, unless a member declares him/herself not voting on a particular item. It shall be the privilege of any member to have his/her vote on any motion recorded by name.
5. The Chairman will announce the result of any vote taken. No action shall carry unless it shall receive the vote of a majority of the members present. The School Committee may, under certain circumstances and for certain kinds of action, require more than a majority vote to carry.<sup>2</sup>
6. The official by-laws of the School Committee may be amended by vote of a majority of the full Committee at a regular meeting provided the proposed amendment has been introduced in writing at the previous regular meeting and the notice of the proposed amendment has been introduced in writing at a previous regular meeting and the notice of the proposed change is included in the call of the meeting at which action is to be taken.<sup>3</sup>

LEGAL REFS: Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, pp. 3-4, 258, 340

## MINUTES

The minutes of a Mansfield 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. Minutes should be scheduled to be approved at the next regularly scheduled School Committee meeting.

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. 39:23B; 66:10

CROSS REF . KDB, Public's Right To Know

## **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

All regular and special meetings of the Mansfield 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 citizens of the district to attend its meetings so that they may become better acquainted with the operations and the programs of our local public schools. In addition, the Committee would like the opportunity to hear the wishes and ideas of the public.

In order that all citizens who wish to be heard before the Committee have a chance and to insure the ability of the Committee to conduct the district's business in an orderly manner, the following rules and procedures are adopted:

1. At the start of each regularly scheduled School Committee meeting, individuals or group representatives will be invited to address the Committee. The length of the public participation segment shall be determined by the Chairman.
2. Speakers will be allowed three (3) minutes to present their material. The presiding Chairman may permit extension of this time limit.
3. Topics for discussion must be limited to those items listed on the School Committee meeting agenda for that evening.
4. Improper conduct and remarks will not be allowed. Defamatory or abusive remarks are always out of order. If a speaker persists in improper conduct or remarks, the Chairman may terminate that individuals privilege of address.
5. All remarks will be addressed through the Chairman of the meeting.
6. Speakers may offer such objective criticisms of the school operations and programs as concern them, but in public session the Committee will not hear personal complaints of school personnel nor against any member of the school community. Under most circumstances, administrative channels are the proper means for disposition of legitimate complaints involving staff members.
7. Written comments longer than three (3) minutes may be presented to the Committee before or after the meeting for the Committee members review and consideration at an appropriate time.

## **NEWSPAPERS AND OTHER NEWS MEDIA**

1. Representative of the press and other news media are welcome to attend all meetings of the School Committee except the meetings held in executive session.
2. All School Committee records and approved minutes (with the exception of Classified Executive Sessions) are matters of public record and may, as determined by M.G.L., be examined.
3. A statement of the official School Committee position on a given item issue (as determined by vote of the School Committee) will be given only by the Chairman who is the spokesman for the School Committee. The Chairman of the School Committee may call upon the Superintendent to assist in preparing news releases and public statements about School Committee policies and operations.
4. The Superintendent, in order to keep the public informed, may issue news releases about the educational programs of the schools.
5. News releases will be made available to the media re: activities of the School Committee and the educational programs on the Mansfield Public Schools.

LEGAL REF.: M.G.L., 39:23B

## **SPECIAL PROCEDURES FOR CONDUCTING HEARINGS**

In conducting all public hearings required by law, and others as it deems advisable, 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 Chairman of the Committee will preside at the hearing.

At the beginning of the hearing, the public will be informed of 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 Chairman, and all remarks must be addressed to the Chairman and be germane to the topic. To assure that all who wish get a chance to speak, the Chairman will recognize persons who have not commented previously during the hearing before recognizing persons who wish to remark a second time.

## **FUNCTIONING AS A POLICY-MAKING BODY**

A Mansfield School Committee is given extensive powers under the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts with regard to the governance and control of education within the School District. The School Committee exercises these powers most effectively when it functions as a policy-making body, establishing basic guidelines for discretionary action on the part of the Superintendent of Schools and his/her staff.

1. The School Committee will function as a policy-making body with regard to the educational affairs of the School District.
2. Policies (or changes in policies) presented to the School Committee for consideration will be codified and typed according to the established format of the Official Policy Manual.
3. Once adopted, the policy will be inserted in each copy of the Official Policy Manual.
4. A policy can be abrogated by the School Committee. Once abrogated the policy will be removed from all copies of the Official Policy Manual except for the copy officially designated as the "legal-historical copy."
5. The Superintendent will function under the policy set by the School Committee. He/she has the authority to issue procedures and regulations in order to carry out his/her responsibilities. The procedures and regulations of the Superintendent will not be included in the Official Policy Manual, but will be made available to the School Committee as necessary and whenever requested.

## **SCHOOL COMMITTEE POLICY DEVELOPMENT**

The Mansfield 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. 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 Mansfield 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 -- first reading of 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**

The School 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.

## **SCHOOL COMMITTEE REVIEW OF REGULATIONS**

It is expected that the Superintendent and administrative staff will need to issue regulations implementing policies of the Mansfield 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 regulations 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 regulations only when, in the Committee's judgment, they are inconsistent with policies adopted by the Committee.

The Committee will not officially approve regulations 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 Department of 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

## **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 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/STAFF COMMUNICATIONS**

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

### Staff Communications to the School Committee

All communications or reports to the School Committee from Principals, supervisors, teachers, or other staff members shall be submitted through the Superintendent. This necessary procedure shall not be construed as denying the right of any employee to appeal to the School Committee from administrative decisions on important matters, provided that the Superintendent shall have been notified of the forthcoming appeal and that it is processed in accordance with the School Committee policy on complaints and grievances.

### 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, and the Superintendent will employ all such media as are appropriate to keep staff fully informed of the School 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 shall be regarded as informal expressions of interest in school affairs and not as "inspections" or visits for supervisory or administrative purposes. Official visits by School Committee members will be carried on only under School Committee authorization and with the full knowledge of staff, including the Superintendent, Principals, and other supervisors.

### Social Interaction

Staff and School Committee members share a keen interest in the schools and in education generally, and it is to be expected that when they meet at social affairs and other functions, they will informally discuss such matters as educational trends, issues, and innovations and general school district problems. However, staff members are reminded that individual School Committee members have no special authority excepting when they are convened at a legal meeting of the School Committee or vested with special authority by School Committee action.

## **ORIENTATION OF NEW SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Orientation will be provided to new School Committee members through activities such as the following:

1. Workshops for new School Committee members conducted by State and area School Committee associations.
2. Discussions and visits with the Superintendent and other members of the school staff.
3. Provision of printed and audio-visual materials on School Committee policies and administrative regulations.

## **DEVELOPMENTAL ACTIVITIES OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

1. Mansfield School Committee members are encouraged to engage in activities which will broaden their vision and knowledge of education and increase their competence as they function on a meeting-by-meeting basis on the Committee.
2. "In-service education" for School Committee members takes many forms: membership in local, state and national School Committee and school board associations; attendance and participation at clinics, workshops, conferences and conventions; reading of newsletters, periodicals and books about education and School Committee operation; and visiting schools with exemplary programs.
3. The Mansfield School Committee members serve without compensation. Committee members will be reimbursed for the costs of activities which enable them to perform their official duties more effectively. The School Committee should establish guidelines and procedures for reimbursement of members for items such as: books, subscriptions, transportation, meals, lodging, membership fees and conference costs.

LEGAL REF.: M.G.L., 71:52

## **INDEMNIFICATION**

The Mansfield School Committee shall appropriate funds for the purpose of maintaining an insurance policy to indemnify members for expenses or damages incurred in the defense or settlement of a claim against a member which arose while he/she was acting within the scope of his/her official duties, to the extent and subject to the limitations imposed by law.

## **SCHOOL COMMITTEE LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM**

The Mansfield 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.

## **MEMBERSHIPS IN SCHOOL COMMITTEE STATE ASSOCIATION**

It shall be the policy of the Mansfield School Committee to maintain membership in the Massachusetts Association of School Committees, Inc. Through this membership in the state association, the School Committee maintains indirect membership in the National School Boards Association.

The Mansfield School Committee shall seek to participate as fully as possible in the activities of these organizations.