

BOARD OF EDUCATION OF ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY
POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING
ADMINISTRATIVE MINUTES NOVEMBER 30, 2021

The Board of Education Policy Committee met at 3:00 p.m. on the above date virtually. Board members present were Joanna Tobin, Chair; Melissa Ellis, Board President; Gloria Dent; and Bunmi Omisore. Staff members present were Jeanette Ortiz, Legislative and Policy Counsel; Darren Burns, Board Counsel; Bob Mosier, Chief Communications Officer; Walter Federowicz, Director of Internal Audits; Alex Szachnowicz, Chief Operating Officer; Grace Fielhauer, Legislative and Policy Specialist; and Diane Howell, Executive Assistant to the Board. Also present was Shawn McAteer, Citizens Advisory Committee.

Review and Approval of Minutes: Dr. Tobin opened the meeting with the approval of the minutes from the November 3, 2021, Committee meeting. The minutes were approved by consensus.

Policy to Review

EG – Naming School Facilities: The Committee previously discussed Policy EG at the November 2, 2021, meeting and several revisions were suggested. Ms. Ortiz provided a summary of the Committee’s suggestions, including that C.3. be amended to state that the Board may “rename”, as opposed to “revoke”, the name of a facility.

Dr. Tobin asked if “extraordinary circumstances” was too broad a term; she believes it gives the Board the necessary flexibility and that she is comfortable if the Committee is also comfortable with the language. There was no objection.

The Committee voted unanimously to move the policy to the full Board for first reading on December 15th.

EH – Emergency Plans: Ms. Ortiz explained that this policy was previously reviewed and updated in 2018; however, given the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, former Committee members wished to include pandemic terminology in the policy as well as ensure AACPS practices align with appropriate local, State, and federal practices. To that end, Ms. Ortiz amended the issue statement to include language addressing pandemics, as well as emergencies, and a second position statement was added.

Ms. Ellis expressed concern regarding the addition of the the term “pandemic”, which may not have a specific legal definition and that it may put AACPS in a position to overreach its authority. Ms. Ortiz responded that pandemic is a defined instance and AACPS would not make this determination, rather it would be made by the appropriate government authority. Mr. Burns suggested that the issue statement be amended to include the phrase, “...as determined by applicable government authorities.” The Committee adopted this suggestion and voted unanimously to move the policy to the full Board for first reading on December 15th.

JAA – Redistricting and Attendance Areas: Ms. Ortiz provided the Committee with the policy’s history; the Committee has reviewed and discussed this policy several times. Mr. Burns reminded the Committee of recent State Board cases on redistricting. At the last review in July, the Committee agreed on a final draft of the policy and requested that the CAC review the policy as revised.

The CAC reviewed the proposed revisions and provided a report with two recommendations: (1) remove the last paragraph of the issue statement, and (2) hire a consultant for each redistricting process. Ms. Ortiz reminded the Committee that the last paragraph was included based on original CAC feedback. Neither Ms. Ortiz nor Mr. Szachnowicz recommend the use of an outside consultant for each redistricting process.

Dr. Tobin shared that the CAC was particularly concerned with potential or perceived conflicts of interests regarding the redistricting process and suggested that the Committee work to address this concern rather than requiring a consultant for every redistricting process. Mr. McAteer concurred. Ms. Dent asked a question regarding the current redistricting process.

Ms. Ellis indicated that the CAC report raised several key points regarding the redistricting process, including that identifying all school impacted is critical and must be done accurately at the beginning of the process, and that consultants can help to eliminate the perception of bias. She would like the entire Board to consider the CAC’s recommendations. Dr. Tobin concurred.

Dr. Tobin proposed that the Committee include language in the policy to trigger when a consultant should be a part of the redistricting process. She also suggested that it may be more appropriate for this language to be included in the regulation. Ms. Ortiz responded that the Committee included an application process in the regulation to address possible perceptions of bias by members of a redistricting committee.

Ms. Ellis recommended technical amendments to C.5.a. and C.6.c. to include an “s” in the word “proposal” as the Board may consider more than one proposal. She also recommended that the word “and” in C.5.b. be replaced, perhaps with the word “or”. Ms. Ortiz will look at the language to ensure it is clear.

Ms. Ellis discussed adding a process for triggering events that may lead to a county-wide redistricting. Ms. Ortiz explained that this language was included in the regulation. Ms. Ellis recommended that such language be included in the policy rather than the regulation. Ms. Dent asked about the frequency of redistricting. Ms. Ellis moved to add language to the policy to identify events that trigger a consideration for county-wide redistricting rather than in the regulation. The Committee discussed the triggering events that should be included in the policy, including when a new high school is conducted and when GDP data is released. The Committee considered whether the decennial census or the GDP was the more appropriate trigger. Mr. Szachnowicz indicated that the GDP is the correct triggering data. The Committee agreed to also include language describing these triggering events in Policy JAA.

The Committee moved by consensus to move the policy to the full Board for first reading on December 15th.

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Good of the Order: None

Adjourn: 4:00 p.m.