

BOARD OF EDUCATION, NEW FAIRFIELD, CT
Policy Subcommittee Meeting

Name of Subcommittee: Policy Meeting type: Special
Date of Meeting: 9/1//21
Members present: Kathy Baker, Samantha Mannion, Rick Regan, Stephanie Strazza
Members absent:
Other attendees: Dr. Pat Cosentino, Greg Flanagan, Peggy Katkocin
Minutes submitted by: Stephanie Strazza
Place of Meeting: Meeting Access: Policy Subcommittee (9/1/21)
Web: <https://zoom.us/j/91393562585> Dial In: (929) 205-6099 Meeting ID: 913 9356 2585

The meeting was called to order at 6:04 p.m.

III. ACTION ITEMS

A. Policy 1120 – Public Participation at Board of Education Meetings

The committee discussed potential revisions to Policy 1120. There have been ongoing concerns about unrestricted public comment derailing the business of regular BOE meetings. The committee identified several items that could potentially be added/revised in the policy, such as statements that were not related to topics on the agenda and the redundancy of multiple speakers commenting on the same topic. There was also discussion surrounding the lack of enforcement of the existing policy, specifically time limits, the speaker identification requirement, and back and forth dialogue between board members and the public.

Samantha shared that in comparison to the policies of 22 surrounding school districts, New Fairfield's policy is far less stringent. The CABA attorney confirmed with her that it is within the legal authority of school boards to regulate public comment. Members of the committee were concerned that the new policy would not be received well by the public, and the policy itself could become an issue. The committee agreed that redirecting the public to speak at subcommittee meetings could be an appropriate solution. Kathy spoke about the importance of reinstating the Community Outreach Subcommittee before the policy is amended. Stephanie asked about needing an additional policy to prevent subcommittee meetings from being derailed. Greg was concerned about the timing of adopting a stricter policy. Peggy and Greg agreed that the policy changes should consider the expectations of the New Fairfield community, and that the meeting operations in other districts should not be the reason for the revisions. Rick expressed concern that strict time limits would prevent many residents from having a turn to speak. He raised concerns about restricting public comment to agenda items only, citing times when off topic comments were relevant and effective.

The committee agreed to table the action item to further review the proposed amendments.

Motion: To table the proposed amendments to Policy 1120 – Public Participation at Board of Education Meetings

Made by: Samantha Mannion

Second: Kathy Baker

Record of Vote: All in favor

IV. INFORMATION ITEMS - No information items were discussed.

V. OTHER - No other items were discussed

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn: Made by: Samantha Mannion

Seconded by: Kathy Baker

Recording of vote: All in favor

Meeting adjourned at: 8:20 p.m.