

Work Session  
Monday, January 20, 2025 5:30 PM

Vicksburg Administration Building  
301 S. Kalamazoo St.  
Vicksburg, MI 49097

## Agenda

Board Members Present: Rick Burmeister, Tina Forsyth, Lisa Hostetler, Stephanie Willoughby, Dave Schriemer, Dan Grabowski, Ron Centofanti

Board Members Absent: None

Board Secretary: Tamara Young

Administrators Present: Keevin O'Neill

Guests Present: See attached sign in sheet

President Schriemer called to order at 5:42pm

I. Audience Comment. John Stears addressed the board. He expressed concern the meeting didn't start on time and there was a meal provided for the board. He also expressed concern there was no board packet or a live streaming with live comments via call in. He's worried this is what we are teaching our kids. Lisa Hostetler asked Stears to explain who he was. Dave Schriemer reminded Stears he always has the opportunity to email board members.

II. Board Committee Structure.

II.A. Committee of the whole via work sessions. Schriemer would like to suggest having a regular/optional work session on our calendars for better communication. He would like to target the 3rd Monday of the month, as needed. There was a discussion about what purpose a smaller committee can have vs a committee as a whole and when we vote for action items.

II.B. Personnel Committee. This has to do with contract issues with personnel.

II.C. Ad Hoc Committees. Schriemer suggested one to investigate cell phone policies for students. Schriemer would like Ron Centofanti and Keevin O'Neill to head the committee. If others are interested in joining, please let Schriemer know. Rick Burmeister would like to be added to the committee. Dan Grabowski talked about an acquaintance who told him about Otsego's no tolerance policy. Lisa Hostetler asked what the current teachers are doing and if it's working. Centofanti asked about the other committees we have had in the past. Schriemer feels the committees in the past were not as productive. He would like to see the committees have a beginning, an action period, and an end.

III. Board Policy 0144.2 discussion. Dave Schriemer read our current policy for review. Schriemer highlighted community members who come to the board before going to a teacher, building principal, and superintendent first. They should be encouraged to follow the proper chain of command. This issue was especially highlighted during COVID. Schriemer reminded everyone about the classes through MASB and sitting down with Steve Goss and his knowledge of the budget if they have questions. Schriemer also mentioned the temptation of social media.

Confidentiality is very important for Negotiations, behavioral issues (expulsion), and employee disciplinary actions/investigation. Discussion about the importance of bringing issues from the committee to Keevin so he can investigate further. Schiemer presented the same policy from Portage Public Schools for our review/discussion. Centofanti wanted to discuss item “A”. He asked about the procedures of dealing with a board member who is not engaged. Forsyth really felt “K” is especially important due to conflicts and possibly opinions of board members. Topics should be discussed, voted on, and then stand by the vote. Any changes made to these policies would need to go through 1st and 2nd reading. “Q” is the other line item Schiemer feels is important. It deals with contract negotiations. O’Neill explained the process of contract negotiations with the collective bargaining groups. “R” deals with what board issues vs not a board issue. Centofanti wanted clarification about responding back to an audience member who addresses the board. Schiemer discussed the difference between a public forum and a board meeting. A board meeting is not meant to be a public conversation. O’Neill discussed the examples of the possible mold at Sunset Lake and COVID. These issues are challenging to end because beliefs were different and there was not going to be a consensus. Lisa Hostetler discussed the example of last fall. There was an open lawsuit and the board was directed by their lawyers not to speak. Centofanti wanted clarification of the board responding to the audience comments. He gave the example of a material challenge of a book in our library. Keevin explained we can always send someone to the process to challenge. Rick Burmeister also feels a dialogue at a board meeting is not a productive way to deal with issues. Each issue brought to the board is a specific case and will be handled individually. Schiemer asked if everyone could think on this and we can circle back to this topic next month. Schiemer asked O’Neill to run Portage’s policy by our Neola rep and report back.

IV. Board Procedures. Schiemer discussed the history of our procedures. In the past, board packets were released to the board on a Friday afternoon. The board would like to have it sooner. Thursday would be the expectation, but Wednesday would be great. Schiemer asked O’Neill how he and Goss would like to receive questions. O’Neill said email and phone calls are great. O’Neill also asked if the board would prefer him to reply directly to that board member or “reply all” so everyone has all the answers. Grabowski said the questions were situational in his opinion. Some answers are needed to be known by the whole group. O’Neill stated he was comfortable replying to all with answers when needed. Schiemer talked about a manual with “how to” topics for board members so everyone knows how to do things. He is going to get a packet from another district for us to review. Centofanti discussed the difference between formal board meetings and work sessions. He stated he appreciates hearing directly from each school and their annual reports. There was a discussion about the building improvement plan and how the schools choose what topics to report to the school board annual reports. Schiemer appreciates the report on specific students and the difference we are making to those students along with the overall data. Burmeister loves the qualitative and quantitative results. Centofanti requested the schools report to the school board in the same format. Hostetler asked if the annual reports could be included in the packet in order to be printed. Schiemer would like to table this until next month.

V. Board Calendar. Tentative calendar passed out to the board.

Hostetler asked for an update on Title 9 from Supt O'Neill. O'Neill stated we are waiting for more guidance and there are rumors since the inauguration is over, things may change again. Hostetler stated her "constituents" would like the bathroom issue resolved by only biological genders being in separate bathrooms. O'Neill reported the "gender identity" definition is the topic that needs to be discussed and we need clear clarification from the legal council. Centofanti asked to view the Title 9 training for our staff. Centofanti asked our Title 9 coordinators to present at a future meeting. He would also like to be set up with the training.

Tamara to start a google sheet for all contact information.

There being no further business to come before the Board, President Schriemer adjourned the meeting at 7:29 pm.

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President Dave Schriemer  
February 10, 2025

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Secretary Tamara Young