

June 3, 2024

GOVERNANCE SUBCOMMITTEE

**Governance Subcommittee
Monday, June 3, 2024 at noon
Broadcast from the Media Arts Studio
454 Broadway, Cambridge, MA 02138**

Called for the purpose of reviewing the proposed additions and/or amendments to the Rules of the School Committee which were provisionally adopted on January 9, 2024.

Subcommittee Members Present: Mayor Simmons (Chair); Vice Chair Hunter

Other Members Present: Member Weinstein

Also Present: Dr. Greer, Superintendent of Schools

Mayor Simmons in chair.

The meeting began at 12:07 p.m. with the Confidential Secretary reading the call of the meeting.

The group began the discussion by reviewing the motion put forth by Member Rachel at the May 7 Regular meeting. The motion reads as follows:

WHEREAS: School Committee [policy ABA](#) notes the Committee's commitment to seeking and encouraging public participation in the body's decision-making processes; and

WHEREAS: The body's Rules do not specify when meeting registration opens to the public, but past practice has been two days before the meeting; and

WHEREAS: The Committee intends to remove barriers to participation; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED: That meeting registration and public comment sign-up will be available to all members of the public beginning at the time a meeting is officially noticed with an agenda or designated purpose.

The group noted that Member Rachel's intent of putting forth the motion to increase public participation. **Mayor Simmons** and **Vice Chair Hunter** noted the potential challenges of operationalizing public comment registration with varying registration windows. In addition, they believe this change may cause confusion for the public. **Mayor Simmons** noted the potential burden to CPSD administrators. She underscored that she appreciates the consistency of a 48-hour window. **Member Weinstein** highlighted that the motion included that public comment registration would open only with a posted meeting agenda. He supported the motion. **Mayor Simmons** mentioned that, in the absence of a School Committee Executive Secretary, she believes the person in this position would want to provide input on this operational change. **Mayor Simmons** would like Member Rachel to join a future subcommittee meeting to discuss her motion in further detail.

The discussion pivoted to Vice Chair Hunter's proposal:

To develop a deep understanding of our schools and the complexities they face, School Committee Members will visit schools as often as possible, with prior notice to principals. School Committee Members will attend school-based events to connect directly with students, teachers, and caregivers in order to hear multiple viewpoints,

increase trust, and build relationships. 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 will 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.

Vice Chair Hunter shared that her proposal was an affirmation of intention. She hoped to include the amended proposal because the current Rules of the School Committee are procedural and do not mention connections to caregivers and students. **Mayor Simmons** questioned the need for this addition, as the Committee's primary purpose was policy. She underscored that she believed the proposal was coming from a positive place, but shared her past experiences with former Committee members who took advantage of school visits with negative outcomes. **Mayor Simmons** asked Dr. Greer to share her thoughts. Dr. Greer noted that school visits had been an ongoing conversation and highlighted the importance of collaborative partnerships. Dr. Greer underscored her commitment to ensuring that school visits be thoughtful and structured. She shared that principals are concerned about disruptions and she believed that trainings and additional discussions were warranted and could be beneficial to all involved. **Mayor Simmons** stressed the visits should be prescribed and ultimately strengthen the Committee's role to develop policy. **Vice Chair Hunter** shared her appreciation for the discussion, solicited their continued suggestions and offered to come back to the subcommittee with amended language.

Mayor Simmons pivoted the conversation to page 12 of the School Committee Rules which referenced Public Comment. She highlighted the usefulness of the City Council's rules which are prescriptive and outlined time limits based on the number of meeting attendees. **Member Weinstein** highlighted the possible need to include provisions to the time limits for those needing accommodations such as assisted technology. **Mayor Simmons** asked Member Weinstein to draft language relating to his suggestion. **Mayor Simmons** questioned the need for the CEA president to have 6 minutes for public comment given that all others were allotted 3 minutes.

The discussion turned to the "School Committee Norms, Statement of Intent" section of the Rules. **Mayor Simmons** inquired about the historical background of this section and was curious why Taunton was recognized in the text. She asked the Confidential Secretary to research this section and circle back to the subcommittee.

Member Weinstein elevated the idea of adding a subcommittee focused on School Councils. He believes the subcommittee could provide a structure to review School Improvement Plans and increase dialogue with School Councils.

Mayor Simmons concluded the meeting at 1:06 p.m.