

Rules Management Subcommittee Meeting Report December 16, 2024

The meeting was called to order at 5:35 pm with subcommittee members Leiran Biton and Ellenor Barish as well as Chief of Staff and Strategy Amara Anosike present. There were two people in the audience. There were four items on the agenda.

Mr. Biton moved to approve the notes from the November Rules meeting, seconded by Ms. Barish. The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Barish took item three out of order and those in attendance reviewed comments from the legal team on MASC's recommendations for Section A of the policy manual.

In reference to the legal team's comments on ACA-R, Mr. Biton asked Ms. Anosike if there is a reason the administration would want to limit appeal rights of employees. She will get back to the subcommittee but her initial response was in support of allowing for appeals.

Mr. Biton also asked if Ms. Mallon had thoughts on removing definitions of Sexual Harassment as suggested by the legal team. Ms. Mallon pointed out that such lists are not exhaustive and that it's hard to say "including but not limited to" in a heavily legal document. She suggested that we should ask the legal team where those definitions should live if they are removed from the policy; they should be somewhere (eg. handbook or district procedures).

The next item on the agenda was JCA - Controlled Choice Student Assignment Policy. Mr. Biton has been working with Teresa Rodriguez to revise this policy and expressed gratitude for how productive that collaboration has been. The goal of this draft was to streamline the policy and align the language with current practice. Mr. Biton will prepare a "track changes" version so it's easier to see the changes that are being proposed. This version does not address potential changes that we discussed at earlier meetings - Brown School transition process, PreK assignment process, rebalancing based on high needs status. Dr. Carmona's preference was to pass an interim policy while we continue to consider how the district might best address those challenges.

Ms. Pitone requested that we reconsider including some information about the Brown School process so that it is clear to families applying for kindergarten. Mr. Biton wondered if that was necessary since that process is described in this document under *School Transfers*. Ms. Pitone advocated for more clarity. For example, do Brown School students finishing fifth grade get placed prior to all other transfers? What about students who attend K at Capuano? Ms. Barish wondered if this is the same process for students who skill out of a program. Ms. Pitone suggested that the policy could direct caregivers to details located online or in a handbook. Mr. Biton will bring new revisions in a track changes format to the next meeting.

The final item on the agenda was Policy Manual Review: Section B which covers School Committee governance. For most of the policies, Ms. Mallon recommends minimal grammatical changes. Some exceptions follow:

BB - Legal Status

Ensure that our version aligns with the laws cited in the MASC version. Ms. Mallon will change Board of Aldermen to City Council.

BBA - School Committee Powers and Duties

Struck number 6 and 7. Number 7 is covered in the introductory paragraph and law is cited below. Number 6 is inaccurate as we approve bill rolls, not individual bills. Ms. Mallon recommended that we check with a School Business Official (Joe or Pat) to ensure that we get the language right if we want to retain something about approving bill rolls. Most districts call it the warrant.

BBBA/BBBB - Qualifications/Oath of Office

Ms. Mallon recommends the MSBA version for the up-to-date ethics training requirement. Ms. Barish will confirm that the City Clerk keeps track of School Committee ethics training status.

BCBA - Conflict of Interest

Ms. Mallon recommends removal of this policy as it is redundant. The material is covered in the ethics rules and later policies.

BDA - Organizational Meeting

Ms. Mallon recommends retaining this policy as long as it aligns with the City Charter. Ms. Pitone suggested adding the Caucus process to this policy so that it is codified somewhere. Ms. Mallon will pull the language from the City Charter and add it to the revisions.

BDB - Responsibilities of Officers and Members

Members did not recommend any changes to the listed responsibilities and acknowledged that some may have been overlooked in recent years.

BDE - Subcommittees

Members recommended adding the Long Range Committee.

BDEA - School Committee Meeting for Long Range Planning

Ms. Mallon will move some of this language to the previous policy.

BDF - Advisory Committees

Ms. Mallon recommends adding number 9 to cover Open Meeting Law. She also added MGL references and cited JIB.

BDFA - School Councils

Ms. Mallon recommends the MASC version which offers a clearer discussion of approval, references MGL appropriately, and consolidates all of the BDFA-E policies.

BDFA-Es - Ms. Mallon recommends removing these policies with the adoption of the MASC version of BDFA but recommends flagging this for the administration to review.

BDG - School Attorney

Ms. Mallon recommends the MASC version because the relationship is better clarified.

The remainder of the policies in this section will be taken up at the next Rules Management Subcommittee Meeting, scheduled for January 27.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:34 pm.

Documents used:

JCA - Controlled Choice Student Assignment Policy (Draft)

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Somerville DRAFT Section A With Changes 12.5.24 jrc edits
Somerville DRAFT Section B Analysis
Somerville DRAFT Section B With Changes