

Nantucket School Committee
Workshop Minutes
April 23, 2019

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2 Present Members: Jennifer Iller, Timothy Lepore, Pauline Proch and Steve Sortevik, Zona Butler (4:16 arrival);
3 Superintendent Michael Cozort, James Hardy, MASC Field Director
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5 The workshop was called to order as a quorum was present, by Chair, Jennifer Iller at 4:00 PM in the Nantucket High
6 School LGI. Steve Sortevik made a motion to approve the agenda, which was seconded by Tim Lepore, and the
7 Committee approved unanimously. The Chair motioned to move to a Workshop with the same persons approving.
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9 Jennifer Iller welcomed Mr. James Hardy who initiated his conversation that he would be reviewing the Self
10 Evaluation, discussing the School Committee's idea of putting out a survey to the public, and the roles of the School
11 Committee as a 'whole board'. Mr. Hardy had previously examined the School Committee Self Evaluation (presented
12 a few weeks earlier at a School Committee meeting) and thought aloud that the board was mostly in agreement which
13 is a *good* thing. He stated there were a few areas where the Committee did not agree and that could be addressed to
14 better understand why. He broke down each category as follows:
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16 GOVERNANCE: He thought perhaps #2 statement about the mission statement of the Committee being consistent
17 with the district might have been confusing as penned as some members thought this meant that the SC should have a
18 mission statement separate from the district's. He complimented our district on our's as it should be (and is) short,
19 concise and recognizable. Mrs. Iller shared that the Committee now includes the district mission statement on all
20 documents, including the agenda, to ensure it is visible. He also commented that our policies are well done and up-to-
21 date. The #5 statement in this category about taking part in educational workshops and conferences to better inform
22 their decisions had one person say they did not know. Superintendent Cozort suggested through the Chair, this is why
23 he urges the Committee members to attend the annual conference for National School Board Association and/or the
24 MASC Executive Conference. These venues provide very helpful and informative workshops that can enhance their
25 productivity and understanding.
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27 OPERATIONS: Mr. Hardy referred to the Manual that has been provided by the Central Office to each committee
28 member and always a new member as they are voted onto the slate. This manual is very comprehensive and defines
29 the roles, procedures and operations. He did state that there may be some protocols that should be put in place.
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31 MEMBER RELATIONS: This area was mostly positive and almost all were in agreement. One area that could use
32 some improvement thought one committee member, was homework and coming prepared to meetings to make
33 informed decisions.
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35 COMMITTEE/SUPERINTENDENT RELATIONS: This area was also mostly positive and looks well on the road to
36 continuing. A specific area about the Superintendent informing the Committee of major personnel decisions was not
37 supported by one member, but Mr. Hardy reminded them this is not an area of their purview. They hire the
38 Superintendent, but then they support his personnel decisions because it is to be assumed he is making appropriate
39 decisions best for the district.
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41 STRATEGIC PLANNING: The committee was split on their responses about whether a Strategic Plan exists or not.
42 With the close of the last academic year, so ended the five-year Strategic Plan. With the notion to evoke another plan,
43 there were meetings with Administrators and district personnel and the process had begun to create a new plan. The
44 Superintendent had each building administrator and department head create a SWOT analysis (precursor to draft a
45 Strategic Plan) in an effort to help the plan take shape. When the Committee realized the present Superintendent
46 would be retiring, they determined to discontinue the process until the new Superintendent came into the picture. Now
47 that the new Deputy Superintendent has been hired and will work under the wing of the current Superintendent, a focus
48 to create the Strategic Plan is back on the docket with July as the intended timeline.
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FISCAL MANAGEMENT: The Committee felt that the budget process has been transparent and inclusive and that they have been kept well informed, with numerous presentations on all aspects of the budget development.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS: Mr. Hardy reviewed how each Committee member should represent themselves as both individuals and as a whole group. He reminded them they are to engage as a board always and while they can hear community member’s ideas, thoughts, complaints, or compliments, they are not to be responsive in taking a side, but rather simply taking the information. He continued that Public Comment sections of regular meetings are not “open-mike-night” opportunities or one-on-one conversations, because meetings for the School Committee are only business meetings and must operate as such. If the School Committee welcomes more comments they ought to consider a public forum that is separate from the business of the agenda. Horizon calendars and weekly agendas are clearly thought and defined out ahead of time (almost a year ahead with modifications as needed throughout each month) and people can publicly see what is on the agenda and when, and tailor their comments to those opportune moments.

CONDUCT OF MEETINGS: Mr. Hardy began by reminding the Committee that their meetings are “a meeting in public, not a public meeting. “ Again, the Committee was mostly in agreement in this category. Mr. Hardy reminded them to come prepared ready to make their best judgement calls for public presentations and voting. They can always vote differently, remembering the majority will win if not a consensus. Mr. Hardy wrapped up the Self Evaluation by sharing that MASC might tweak this evaluation to better drill down how to foster better work from Boards/Committees and how the function of the group is to support the Superintendent meeting the district’s goals. It is these goals that outline the year and the targets for achievement the Committee thinks should be the priority.

In the next section of the Workshop Mr. Hardy reviewed a new document sponsored by the National School Board Association and based on two studies done by the public foundation, Center for Public Education. Five years of research contributed to a rubric illustrating what is a high performing school district. The foundation determined there are eight characteristics of effective school boards that contribute and these findings are based on information gleaned from state assessments, commonality of standardized tests like the SAT, college admissions, dropout rates, student success rates, attendance, truancy, contributions from community and more. The eight characteristics are:

- Commit to a vision of high expectations for student achievement and quality instruction, defining clear goals toward that vision
- Have strong shared beliefs and values about what is possible for students and their ability to learn
- School boards are accountability driven, spend less time of operational issues and more time on focused policies to improve achievement
- Have a collaborative relationship with staff, community and establish strong communications structure to inform all stakeholders
- Be data savvy, embrace data even when the data information is negative and use it to move forward for improvement
- Align and sustain resources
- Lead as a united team with the Superintendent with strong collaboration and mutual trust
- Take part in team development and training, to build shared knowledge, values, and commitments for improvement efforts

Mr. Hardy continued by reiterating to the Committee to stay focused and not get sidetracked. Always present to the entire community not any one stakeholder. Mr. Sortevik offered he did not think the Committee gets sidetracked. Superintendent Cozort offered, again through the Chair, that the Committee definitely values the whole child and this is their focused ideal and he feels the district definitely functions with this in mind. He also offered to the School Committee, sometimes the perceptions of the Committee from some outsiders is that they are not always doing their homework and it is hard to separate reality from perception. Mr. Hardy thought this might be a good conduit for the Committee to participate in a survey that he has created to identify and define characteristics of a high performing School Committee, thinking this might be a next step from the Self-Evaluation. And, as the survey expands it could be

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102 an option to help facilitate the committee becoming more effective. He offered a link to a survey and asked that they
103 each take the survey and return the results to him in the next few weeks. (The Clerk will send the link with a date of
104 return).

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106 The conversation shifted to the collaboration and relationships between the teaching staff and the School Committee
107 and especially how much the Committee enjoys being asked into classrooms. It makes them feel like they are more in
108 touch within the district. However, they were a bit surprised when Mr. Hardy questioned why teachers would invite
109 them in and that this could be disruptive to the classroom. Mr. Hardy furthered visits from the School Committee into
110 the classroom in this direct way could be perceived negatively. Mrs. Butler added that it could be seemingly as
111 undermining the administration - Mr. Hardy urged them not to accept invitations from teachers and to go through the
112 proper chain of command. This structure is outlined in policy and is based on a the 1993 Educational Reform Act,
113 which removed Principals from the Union and made them actual Managers, thus creating a proper checks and balance
114 situation for staff, Principals and the Superintendent. Superintendent Cozort asked Mr. Hardy to please explain policy
115 versus procedure so the Committee can have this clearly outlined. Mr. Hardy quoted Policy is the “what and why” and
116 Procedure are developed by administration to answer the “how, who, where and when”. He closed his comments
117 recommending a book title he likes and that he thinks can help move the Committee forward, Collective Will, by
118 author Stephen Lamb.

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120 To wrap up the workshop, Mr. Hardy specified being on a School Committee is a big job and a member should be
121 prepared for large commitment and big conversations – it is a very important committee. He concluded by reminding
122 the Committee that “none of us can do what all of us can do.” Mrs. Iller thanked Mr. Hardy for a lot of information and
123 felt this was a large amount for the Committee to take away and digest and it is a good place to start. She hoped he
124 would return and perhaps discuss establishing protocols for next year.

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126 At 5:32 pm the School Committee adjourned on a motion made by Steve Sortevik and seconded by Tim Lepore, and
127 unanimously approved.

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130 Respectfully submitted,
131 Logan O’Connor
132 School Committee Clerk