

## PLYMOUTH PUBLIC SCHOOLS

### SCHOOL COMMITTEE ORGANIZATION AND OPERATIONS

#### **BOARD ORGANIZATION AND OPERATIONS**

- 1.0 RESPONSIBILITY:** The specific responsibility of the Plymouth School Committee is to make effective, within the Town of Plymouth, Massachusetts, the laws of the State pertaining to public schools and to uphold the district's strategic plan. In addition, members have a responsibility to uphold the MASC Code of Ethics. See the attached Addendum.
- 2.0 AUTHORITY OF MEMBERS:** The School Committee has authority only when acting as a body. Committee members have no authority except at committee meetings or when discharging an assignment made by the Committee.
- 3.0 INTERACTION AND COMMUNICATION WITH THE PUBLIC:** School Committee members are encouraged to maintain positive communication with the community as it relates to school matters and should refer all matters of concern to the Superintendent in a timely manner for their review. When dealing with school personnel, community groups, and local government agencies, the Committee should keep the school system's goals and objectives in mind. The committee should give positive support to all school enterprises, and in doing so, the committee should resist and redirect the demands of individuals and groups who seek preferential treatment. Any School Committee member under suspicion of violating such authority will be subject to the procedures in Section 10.0.
- 4.0 MEMBERSHIP ON THE COMMITTEE:** The School Committee shall consist of seven members. As stated in the town charter each member shall serve for three years and the Town Clerk will set town election dates.
- 5.0 NEW MEMBERS:** The district will arrange for new members to attend orientation meetings as necessary. The orientation shall be for the purpose of enlightenment and/or orientation of the new committee member and shall not include deliberation of school committee matters. In addition, in accordance with Massachusetts General Law, new members within their first year will attend **all mandated training** provided by MASC.
- 5.1 The Orientation Subcommittee will consist of at least one policy committee member, and the Superintendent, or their designee. Not to exceed three School Committee Members in total.
- 5.2 The Orientation Subcommittee will concentrate on policy issues concerning the role, scope of practice, interaction, and communication with the public.
- 6.0 VACANCIES:** - Whenever a vacancy occurs on the Committee, it shall be filled by a majority vote of the Town Selectmen and the Town School Committee at a joint meeting, according to M.G.L.

Chapter 41, S11.

**7.0 ORGANIZATION:** In accordance with the Town Charter, Chapter 6, Section 1, Paragraph 1, the committee shall elect officers annually at the first meeting following the annual town elections as determined by the Town Clerk. In the event of a successful recall election affecting any School Committee officer(s), the affected position(s) will be reorganized at the first meeting following the recall election.

- 7.1** The newly elected members of the committee shall be sworn to the faithful performance of the duties of that office by the Town Clerk.
- 7.2** Committee officers will serve in their elected or appointed positions until a new organization is established. If no officers remain from the previous election, the senior member determined by tenure will chair the meeting until the chairperson is elected.
- 7.3** After the annual spring Town elections, communication regarding School Committee reorganization is discouraged in favor of the following protocols that will be adhered to during the first meeting following the election.
- 7.4** As the first item of business on the agenda, the Chairperson will turn the meeting over to the Superintendent for reorganization. The Superintendent will explain the reorganization process and call for nominations for the School Committee Chairperson.
- 7.5** The nominee will be given the opportunity to accept or decline the nomination with a yes or no response.
- 7.6** The Superintendent will inquire after further nominations and any subsequent nominees will be given the opportunity to accept or decline the nomination with a yes or no response.
- 7.7** When all nominations have been declared, accepted, or declined, and more than one nomination has been made, the Superintendent will give the nominee(s) a one-minute opportunity to address the board. After all the nominees have been provided the opportunity to speak, the Superintendent will call for a vote.
- 7.8** Following the votes, the School Committee members will make seating adjustments, if necessary, during a brief recess.
- 7.9** The newly-elected Chairperson of the School Committee will then follow the above procedure in electing the Committee's Vice-Chairperson and Secretary.
- 7.10** Officers shall be elected upon receiving a favorable majority of the yea and nay votes cast.
- 7.11** All standing committees and subcommittees shall be discussed and reconsidered at the annual meeting and appointments made thereto as soon as possible thereafter.

## **8.0 OFFICERS AND DUTIES**

### **8.1 CHAIRPERSON**

- 8.1.1** Preside at Committee meetings.
- 8.1.2** May call special meetings for emergencies when he/she/they deem

them necessary or at the request of at least a majority of members of the **Committee**.

- 8.1.3** Sign contracts and other documents in the name of the Committee as approved by the committee
- 8.1.4** Appoint members of special committees with the consultation of the Committee of the whole as soon as possible thereafter.
- 8.1.5** Represent the Committee or designate a member to represent the committee in all matters approved by the committee and at community and school functions.
- 8.1.6** The Chairperson and/or Vice-Chairperson shall address any suspected violation of the School Committee's authority.

## **8.2 VICE-CHAIRPERSON**

- 8.2.1** In the absence of the Chairperson, the Vice-Chairperson assumes the Chairperson's responsibilities.

## **8.3 SECRETARY**

- 8.3.1** Present and sign a correct record of the minutes of all regular and special meetings of the committee.
- 8.3.2** Present all correspondence to the committee.
- 8.3.3** Sign certain official documents for and in the name of the committee.
- 8.3.4** Safeguard the old and current minutes of the committee.
- 8.3.5** In the event that both the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson are absent, the Secretary shall carry out the duties of the Chairperson.

## **9.0 MEETINGS**

**9.1** Regular Meetings: Shall be held at a time and place determined by the Committee, and typically occur on Mondays at least 2x per month. However, should a calendar or other conflict occur, such as a holiday, school vacation week, or other unforeseen events, the Committee shall make the necessary adjustments to the committee meeting calendar. School Committee meeting dates will be presented to the committee with the presentation of the school year calendar and will be voted on. Regular meetings may be canceled by the agreement of a majority of the Committee.

**9.2** In addition to Regular Meetings the School Committee shall have at least two Saturday meetings within a calendar year. These Saturday meetings will be scheduled at least one month in advance and are open to the public.

**9.3** Special Meetings: Shall be called upon by request of a majority of the committee, or when deemed necessary for emergencies by the Chairperson. Written notice of all special meetings shall be given to members of the Committee at least forty-eight (48) hours before the meeting, except in the case of an emergency. In the case of an emergency meeting, each member of the School Committee shall be notified by the means of the member's choice. The agenda for the special meeting will be communicated to the members, and they will receive a written copy of that agenda at the special meeting if not sooner. The special meeting will have a specific purpose, and no other business will be conducted.

**9.4 Recessed Meetings:** Shall be held at the regular meeting hour on a day agreed upon by the members present at the time of recess. A recessed meeting is considered a continuation of the regular meeting rather than a special or called meeting. Regular or special business may be conducted at a recessed meeting.

**9.5 Quorum and Adjournment:** The meetings will not be called to order until a quorum of at least four members are present. A lesser number may adjourn to another definite date. The meeting shall be adjourned at 10:30 P.M. unless there is the consent of a majority of those present to extend the meeting.

**9.6 Community Participation at Meetings:** All school committee meetings for the official transaction of business must be open to the public. Each regular school committee meeting shall include an agenda item of public comment, whereby residents of the Town of Plymouth, at the discretion of the chairperson, may address the committee for a period of approximately three minutes each. (Please refer to Policy 2.25-PUBLIC COMMENT AT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETINGS )

**9.7 Executive Sessions:** The Committee may adjourn any meeting and meet in executive session at any time to discuss matters that should be treated confidentially in accordance with Open Meeting Law. This shall be done by a two-thirds vote after a formal motion. The committee must return to the open session by the same process to finish the agenda.

**9.8 Joint Committee Meeting:** The School Committee shall meet jointly with the Board of Selectmen to share information. The School Committee and the Board of Selectmen shall schedule a joint meeting which shall be held no less than twice a year.

**9.9 Joint meeting with the School Councils:** The School Committee and School Councils from each school in the district shall meet jointly to share information. The School Committee and School Councils will plan the joint meeting(s), which must take place at least once (1) per year.

**9.10 Town Meetings:** Town meetings must convene at least twice (2) per calendar year. The Town Meeting dates are set by the town by-laws and the spring meeting shall include matters that concern the approval of the school district budget. The School Committee Chairperson is responsible for attending the spring Town Meeting and providing the Town with the necessary information and documents needed to support their deliberations.

**9.11 Parliamentary Procedure:** Robert's Rules of Order, shall be used as a guideline at all meetings. All main motions offered for the committee's consideration shall be recorded in the official meeting minutes.

**9.12 Agenda:** The Superintendent of Schools, in collaboration with the School Committee Chairperson, shall prepare an agenda for each regular meeting. A copy of the agenda shall be provided for each committee member, together with any illustrative or supplemental material. All committee members will be provided with a copy of the agenda and its supplements two business days before the meeting date.

**9.13 Citizen Complaints:** A citizen with a complaint should be advised to first discuss their issue with the involved professional staff. Citizens may also bring their concerns to the

attention of the Superintendent.

**9.14** All Other Requests for Hearings: All requests for hearings before the Committee must be made in writing, stating clearly the purpose of the request and the action desired.

## **10.0 ADDRESSING A VIOLATION OF A SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBER**

Any individual who believes that a Committee Member has violated their authority may file a written complaint with the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, or Secretary. The member in question will be notified by the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, or Secretary that an allegation has been brought up against them. The committee member will be provided an opportunity to respond to the issue in question. If another complaint is brought up against the committee member, and it is determined that there has been a violation, the following progressive actions will be taken.

**FIRST VIOLATION:** The School Committee Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, or Secretary will meet with the School Committee member to inform the member of the violation and the real or potential impact of that violation, provide the Committee member with the opportunity to respond, and discuss strategies to ensure a violation does not occur in the future. The Chairperson may invite the Superintendent to attend the meeting. The School Committee Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, and Secretary will write a follow-up letter to the member, summarizing the discussion.

**SECOND VIOLATION:** The School Committee and Superintendent will meet in Executive Session to inform the member of the violation and the real or potential impact of that violation, provide the Committee member with the opportunity to respond, and discuss strategies to ensure a violation does not occur in the future. The School Committee Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, or Secretary will write a follow-up letter to the member informing the member of the violations and the committee's recommendation(s) to ensure no other violation(s) occur.

**THIRD VIOLATION:** The School Committee and Superintendent will meet in Executive Session to inform the member of the violation and the real or potential impact of that violation, and provide the Committee member with the opportunity to respond. With advice from the members, the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, or Secretary may determine a method of presenting the violations at a School Committee meeting in public session. Following the presented comments, the committee member will have an opportunity to respond. School Committee Counsel may be consulted if needed.

**References:** Acts of 2004, CH358: An Act Providing for a Charter of the Town of Plymouth MGL 30A:18, 30A:19, 30A:20, 30A:21, 30A:22, 30A:23, 30A:24, 30A:25

### **Revised:**

Policy Committee Meeting Date: 04/16/2020

School Committee Discussion: 04/27/2020

School Committee Approval: 04/27/20

### **Revised:**

Policy Committee Meeting Date: 05/05/2022

School Committee Discussion: 09/27/2022

School Committee Approval: 10/3/22

## **ADDENDUM A - SCHOOL COMMITTEE ORGANIZATION AND OPERATIONS**

### **SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBER ETHICS**

#### **(Massachusetts Association of School Committees Code of Ethics)**

##### **Preamble**

The acceptance of a code of ethics implies the understanding of the basic organization of School Committees under the Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The oath of office of a School Committee member binds the individual member to adhere to those state laws which apply to School Committees since School Committees are agencies of the state.

**This code of ethics delineates three areas of responsibility of School Committee members in addition to that implied above:**

1. Community responsibility
2. Responsibility to school administration
3. Relationships with fellow Committee members

##### **A School Committee member in their relations with their community should:**

1. Realize that their primary responsibility is to the children.
2. Recognize that their basic function is to be policy-making and not administrative.
3. Remember that they are one of a team and must abide by, and carry out, all Committee decisions once they are made.
4. Be well informed concerning the duties of a Committee member on both a local and state level.
5. Remember that they represent the entire community at all times.
6. Accept the office as a Committee member as means of unselfish service with no intent to "play politics," in any sense of the word, or to benefit personally from their Committee activities.

##### **A School Committee member in their relations with their school administration should:**

1. Endeavor to establish sound, clearly defined policies that will direct and support the administration.
2. Recognize and support the administrative chain of command and refuse to act on complaints as an individual outside the administration.
3. Give the chief administrator full responsibility for discharging their professional duties and hold them responsible for acceptable results.
4. Refer all complaints to the administrative staff for a solution and only discuss them at Committee meetings if within the purview/jurisdiction of the committee.

##### **A School Committee in their relations with their fellow Committee members should:**

1. Recognize that action at official meetings is binding and that they alone cannot bind the Committee outside of such meetings.
2. Realize that they should not make statements or promises of how they will vote on matters that will come before the Committee.
3. Uphold the intent of executive sessions and respect the privileged communications that exist in executive sessions.

**POLICY 2.02**

**REVISIONS PSC APPROVED – October 3, 2022-**

4. Do Not withhold pertinent information on school matters or personnel problems, either from members of their own Committee or from members of other Committees who may be seeking help or information on school problems
5. Make decisions only after all facts on a question have been presented and discussed.

**SOURCE: Massachusetts Association of School Committees**

**NOTE: MASC code of ethics is intended to be a guideline for School Committee members. The code is not binding by law.**