

**EVOLVING ISSUES IN SCHOOL GOVERNANCE**

**MAJOR ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY THE**

**NATIONAL SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION**

**AND THE**

**MASSACHUSETTS ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL COMMITTEES**

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**RACE TO THE TOP INITIATIVE**

**DISTRICT GOVERNANCE SUPPORT PROJECT**

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Certain sections have been highlighted in **red** because they were specifically cited during 2011-2012 as issues in Massachusetts school districts during the year.

This compilation includes some of the emerging and most frequently raised issues on roles and responsibilities of school committees presented by members and stakeholders in Massachusetts and around the country. It has been developed specifically for Massachusetts School Committee members.

MASC welcomes member comments and recommendations for additional content.

We are grateful to our colleagues in the National Organization of State School Boards Associations Executive Directors for helping to compile this information.

As with all MASC resource material, this is provided without cost to our members and is not to be offered for sale.

## **SCHOOL COMMITTEE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Personnel and Policy – Chain of Authority, Personnel, and Confidentiality**

The role of the school committee relative to contracts with professional personnel has several dimensions. They include:

#### **Hiring and Contracting:**

- **Hiring and contracting with the superintendent for up to six years (Ch. 71, Sec. 37).**
- **Confirming and setting compensation for Associate/Assistant Superintendents (Ch. 71, Sec. 59)**
- **Confirming and contracting for up to six years with School Business Officials (Ch. 71, Sec. 41)**
- **Confirm the appointment of a Special Education Administrator (Ch. 71, Sec. 53)**
- **Negotiating collective bargaining agreements with unionized staff (Ch. 150E, Section 1).**
- **Establishing compensation parameters for administrators not subject to collective bargaining, including principals (Ch. 71, Sec. 59B).**

#### **Setting Compensation:**

Compensation refers to anything of value and is not limited to salary. For example, compensation may include vacation, paid and unpaid leave (i.e., sick time, vacations, bereavement leave, and professional days), fringe benefits, “buy-out” provisions, “severance” clauses, and other items. In addition, the school committee, through its policy making role, may establish district rules governing items like school closing, accumulation of unused leave, retirement or severance “buy back” provisions, leave for professional development, and other provisions.

#### **Establishing District Policy**

Many district policies impact personnel contracting and employment and range from recruitment and retention policies, collective bargaining, fringe benefit applications, due process requirements, and other areas.

#### **Executing Contracts**

The school committee retains the exclusive authority to hire, contract with, evaluate, and terminate a superintendent.

The school committee confirms and approves contracts with the School Business Official. Subsequent contracts would require school committee approval.

Contracts for other administrators would be developed by the superintendent based on the policy and budget parameters set by the school committee. However, the authority to evaluate and terminate a contract remains with the superintendent for all employees except the school business officer. The school committee may, through its policy or budget deliberations, eliminate a position.

## **SCHOOL COMMITTEE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Contracts and Contracting: Appropriate Roles for School Committee Members**

**Acting as a Body and Not as an Individual.** The authority of the school committee comes from the body, not from any particular individual. School committee members have no special rights or privileges other than those of parents and citizens. Individual members have no role in negotiating contracts without specific authorization. However, the full board may authorize a single member or members to execute that authority. For example:

- The school committee may authorize the chair to sign a contract on its behalf, or for another member to negotiate tentative agreements.
- Contract provisions that may be negotiated by the school committee in executive session or in private meetings must be approved in public by the school committee.
- The board may authorize a single member to act as its agent or spokesperson.

**Access to Information.** School committee members do not have access to confidential information related to students or employees, except for specific circumstances where a need-to-know applies. However, all personnel contracts are public documents regardless of who has negotiated or signed the agreement. No employee contracts, including principals, are exempt from this requirement. (Annual or periodic evaluations of all employees except for the superintendent are confidential documents and not subject to public disclosure.)

**Visits to Schools.** School committee members must remember that their visit to a school is quickly noticed as most employees will know who they are. Even if you are a parent or citizen-at-large as well as an elected official, your appearance can be intimidating to a school employee. It is all too easy to allow yourself to be perceived as making an official visit when you are, in fact, dealing with your own children or another appropriate matter outside the scope of your board role.

**Unannounced Observations.** As with school visits, observations of teachers or students during the school day are subject to the same standards that apply to all school visitors. It is generally not permissible for School Committee members to be observing classroom instruction unless such observation follows the district policies or the collective bargaining agreement as it applies to all members of the public.

**State Ethics Laws. State ethics laws forbid you from:**

- Using your position for personal gain or advantage.
- Using public resources for private purposes.
- Using your post to act in an inherently coercive manner.
- Acting on behalf of an immediate family member, employer, potential employer, business partner or person with whom you are doing business.

**Members put themselves at risk if they engage in practices that extend beyond their scope. Here are some common examples of problematic situations:**

- Pressuring the superintendent to hire a particular employee.
- Demanding a faculty member write a reference letter for a constituent or to provide special assistance for a student.
- Getting involved in advocating for someone else’s child in a special education placement or assignment.
- Using school supplies for private purposes.
- Usurping the authority of the faculty.

**Collective Bargaining (Failure to Bargain in Good Faith)**

The school committee negotiates (or delegates the negotiation) of union contracts as one of its most important roles. It is important to understand how the formal rules for negotiations apply to avoid problems. Here are some of the more common problematic circumstances:

End-Running the Bargaining Process

Bargaining must take place in the appropriate setting and under carefully described circumstances. Private meetings with union representatives outside of the bargaining process are unfair labor practices. Taking a union leader aside, or being taken aside for a friendly ex-parte discussion violates the standards of good faith bargaining.

Failure to Recognize Bargaining Agent

Bargaining without the union’s chosen representative present can be an unfair labor practice. It is always wise to leave the side bar discussions to the appropriate setting.

**Threats**

**Genuine threats are highly problematic since discussions and actions in the bargaining process are protected from retaliation.**

Disclosing Confidential Information

Bargaining takes place in executive session under the provisions of both labor law (Ch. 150E) and the state's Open Meeting Law (Ch. 30A, Sec. 21(3) and (7)). Disclosing confidential information is an unfair labor practice.

Failure to Follow Protocols

Employees in unions who believe they are victimized by a violation of their contracts may file grievances that the union will advance on their behalf. In many cases, school committees may hear the grievances as part of the steps in the appeal process. Attempting to interfere with a matter that should rightfully be grieved formally, or something that is in the grievance pipeline must be left to the formal process. End running the chain of command is both an unfair labor practice and, in an important recent case, a state ethics law violation.

### **SCHOOL COMMITTEE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES** **Personnel and Policy – Supervision, Personnel Policy and Privacy**

#### **Personnel: Non-Union Administrators/Principals**

School committee members do not supervise administrators, including principals and teachers. Here are some of the more common problems that occur related to these personnel.

#### **Failure to Follow Protocols** **Violating Chain of Authority**

**In addition to the other items noted above, failure to follow the district "chain of authority" puts school committee members at risk of both labor contract and ethics law violations. District employees do not report to the school committee and, therefore, school committee do not have the authority to supervise, assign tasks, or otherwise direct the staff. To do so may violate any one of several restrictions under the law.**

**End running the chain of authority to benefit an individual is an even more serious violation because it**

involves a member using one's position for unfair advantage.

### **Unannounced Visits to Schools/Buildings**

School committee members who are parents do not relinquish their rights as parents and citizens. They may visit any public school or public building under the same conditions as the public at large or parents may do so.

When a school committee member visits a school, that member should follow the protocol for everyone else:

- report to the principal's office,
- sign in, and
- get permission to visit the school.

A school committee should not appear in a school and expect an unscheduled meeting, tour, or access to information.

It is common practice, but not required, to inform the superintendent's office prior to a school visit, but as a parent, you have the right to visit the school on family matters without asking permission of the superintendent. MASC strongly advises that school committee members explain immediately to the principal, teacher or other school personnel that "I am here as a parent," or "I am here as a member of the neighborhood," or "I am here as a citizen," when they are not in an official capacity.

### **Unauthorized Visit to Schools/Classrooms**

A classroom visit by a school committee member follows the same protocol as does a general school visit. Moreover, because classroom visits may appear to be "observations," it is essential to differentiate the appropriate visit of a board member/parent from the visit of a school committee member seeking information in an official capacity.

### **Directives to the Faculty**

Issuing a directive to a faculty member is a likely violation of state ethics laws if it comes from a school committee member. Members do not supervise staff

and, therefore, put themselves at risk if they issue an order to a staff member. Frequent areas of problems occur when:

- Members intervene on behalf of constituents to seek special consideration for a parent or student.
- Members asking faculty to perform work for them that is not a service available to any other resident of the district under the same circumstances.
- Members directing staff to perform any professional duty.
- Members directing staff to attend community meetings or school committee meetings or subcommittee meetings, especially during budget time.

### **Building Supervision and Maintenance**

Under Massachusetts law, the school committee has “general charge” of buildings which refers to policy setting, but the superintendent has oversight of the school buildings in particular including administration and logistics. The exception to the superintendent’s authority is in those cases where by charter or ordinance, certain facilities may be under the oversight of the municipality in which they are located.

Under the “general oversight” doctrine, there are several areas in which building oversight and supervision may involve policy of the school committee. For example:

- The school committee sets policy for building usage for non-school purposes such as rentals and fees.
- The facilities budget for maintenance, supplies and equipment is set by the school committee.
- Through the collective bargaining process, other provisions related to building usage may be negotiated including, for example, location



of a faculty room, planning rooms, parking allotments, vending machines in faculty areas, and other purposes.

- The school committee may review faculty grievances filed through the collective bargaining process related to building issues provided the bargaining agreement includes an appeal to the board.

Other situations need to be reviewed carefully to avoid intruding into the administrative sphere of activity.

For example, there is no ambiguity about some of the following:

- Administrative support staff and building custodians are supervised by the school principal and superintendent.
- Building maintenance is overseen by the principal or central office staff.
- Building logistics are also the purview of the building principal or central office staff as they relate to educator assignments (which may be subject to collective bargaining agreements), office designations (also possibly subject to collective bargaining or individual contract arrangements), and any locally-set building requirements such as zoning.
- Evacuation of school buildings in an emergency or during a drill is the responsibility of the building principal.
- School grounds are usually the responsibility of the school principal or central office staff unless a local ordinance or charter gives the responsibility for grounds and playing fields to the municipality.

It is not uncommon for school committee members to receive complaints about building conditions. These

complaints should be referred immediately to the superintendent.

## **Fiduciary Responsibilities**

In addition to its roles under the MA Education Reform Act, the School Committee has a fiduciary responsibility that has nothing to do with education governance reform. Elected local officials have a fiduciary responsibility to their constituents that includes a “Duty of Care,” a “Duty of Loyalty,” and the responsibility to ensure that district finances are sufficiently transparent so as to protect the public interest.

The school committee has the responsibility to act in the best interests of the school district and to protect its integrity and strength. This includes the transparency of its finances. Moreover, since the peoples’ money cannot be spent without the consent of the people or its representatives (i.e., the school committee), the fiduciary responsibility is an inherent and constitutional responsibility.

It is for this reason that school committees confirm the appointment of the school business official, approve warrants for payment, and set the budget and cost centers for managing the annual financial plan.

Since the school committee acts as a board and not as a set of independent individuals, fiscal questions should be directed at the appropriate time to the appropriate person – usually the superintendent. However, under the principles of fiduciary responsibility, all questions related to budget and finance from the school committee as a body are considered valid and should be respected and answered.

## **Respecting Privacy Disclosing Confidential Information**

The privacy rights of administrators, teachers and students are similar to those of the physician/patient or attorney/client in that their employment evaluations and records as well as student records are confidential,

with access limited only to those with a legitimate need to know.

A school committee member who seeks confidential information about a student, family or faculty member is violating the privacy rights of those individuals. The superintendent, principal, teacher or other employee may not discuss information about another person's child with you without the permission of the parent or guardian.

Similarly, school committee chairs should be extra cautious to avoid violating the privacy rights. In addition, they need to advise parents and teachers about the risks of discussing their own children or students in public to prevent them from giving up the confidentiality to which young people are entitled. Similarly, discussions of professional staff may require confidentiality, depending on the nature of the discussion.

### Special Requests

Special requests can be touchy. A parent who asks you to expedite a letter of recommendation from a teacher may put you in the position of intimidating that faculty member. Accompanying a parent to a Special Education meeting on behalf of a child can put you in an equally inappropriate position. Asking the superintendent to secure for you a special privilege for yourself or a constituent violates the state ethics law.

### Threats/Coercion

**Threats are both inappropriate and illegal because you could be perceived as using your position in an inherently coercive manner. The problem with threats is that a listener may interpret what you believe to be a statement of fact or an innocuous caution as a genuine threat to his/her employment.**

### Terminations/Contract Non-Renewals

One of the most common "contracting" problems for school committee members comes when a popular faculty member is terminated by the superintendent or a principal. This often occurs at the end

of the school year, usually in May and June. Parents and community members usually want to know why the termination is occurring.

Moreover, it is common that the terminated individuals may mobilize colleagues and parents to engage in protests on their behalf. Blogs become active, letters are written to editors, and public comment period becomes a focal point at the next school committee meeting. In fact, parents and terminated employees often turn directly to the school committee because they do not understand or wish to follow the law on school district personnel management.

Complicating the situation is the unrestricted right of parents and citizens to petition the school committee to hear their concerns.

Exacerbating the circumstances are the privacy rights of the educators who lose their positions. Personnel evaluations and personnel records of discipline, improvement plans, and steps a district may have taken prior to the termination are strictly confidential. An employee who discusses them in public set out on a disastrous path and lays out a trap to ensnare the school committee and superintendent who may not disclose the record of an individual staff member.

### **Options for School Committee Members Who Object to Personnel Decisions**

School committee members often ask about their recourse if they believe that inappropriate or unwise personnel decisions have been rendered.

1. Use the superintendent's annual evaluation process to address personnel management.
2. Base superintendent contract renewal decisions upon performance.
3. Address problems through the bargaining process and collective bargaining.

## **SCHOOL COMMITTEE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Evolving Issues: Agendas, Meetings and Member Priorities**

Several new issues have emerged over the past few years that deal with governance and board operations, largely due to the high volume of regulation, unfunded mandates, and other task-oriented responsibilities that challenge everyone's ability to get their work done. These issues also come to light as the MA District Governance Support Project, a joint initiative of MASC and the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, has begun to focus on specific strategies that School Committees can use to improve student achievement.

The major issues involve:

- Role of the Chair.
- Making Meetings More Effective and Purposeful.

- “Vanity” Projects.
- Public Participation

## **ROLE OF THE CHAIR**

The chair is, according to “*Robert’s Rules of Order*,” the servant of the assembly, not the master. The chair is responsible to the members present and those who cannot attend the meeting. The chair is also accountable to the public in the meeting room and those at home. The chair must ensure that the meeting is fair and impartial. Unless provided with special privileges or rights in your by-laws, the chair has no more advantages than the rest of the board except for the responsibility to run the meeting, call upon speakers, administer votes, and open and close the meeting.

The chair must keep the meeting focused and on a relevant topic.

## **AGENDAS**

*Robert’s* also advises that the agenda is the property of the assembly, in your case, the School Committee. The board, by majority vote, may change the agenda subject to the requirements of the MA Open Meeting Law<sup>1</sup>.

## **BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS AT PUBLIC MEETINGS**

The same standards that apply to School Committee members apply to the public. Certain behaviors are considered “out of order” based on *Robert’s Rules of Order*. Most frequent of these include:

1. Making a personal or ad-hominem attack against a member or another person.
2. Attacking a member’s motives (as opposed to the purpose of a motion).
3. Disturbing the assembly, including being disruptive.

In a society where freedom of speech is an honored tradition, the chair of the school committee should be particularly careful in ruling a member out of order, and members should understand the consequences of some of the disturbing behaviors that diminish their credibility. Some of those behaviors common in public boards include:

1. Returning continuously to a point that has been addressed or dismissed.
2. Self-promotion before the audience or a special constituency.

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<sup>1</sup> An important requirement is that the public posting of the meeting must include those items that the chair may reasonably anticipate arising at the meeting. If your posting does not include such items, they may not be raised. The key is that, in order to be discussed, the chair must not reasonably anticipate them.

3. **Promoting oneself at the expense of other members (For example, a member who insists that, "I'm the only person on this board who cares about children.")**
4. **Inability to stop talking.**

**Members would be well advised to note that the meeting audience and viewers at home watching a broadcast of the meeting are very quick to note and dismiss individuals and comments who take too long to make their point or monopolize meeting time with unnecessary remarks.**

## **LEGAL COUNSEL**

**School Committees often retain legal counsel and may use several attorneys or law firms to handle special areas of law such as collective bargaining, special education, litigation, or purchasing. The client of legal counsel is the school district and, more specifically, the School Committee. On occasion, because a legal matter may involve confidential information about a student or employee, the client becomes the superintendent or special education director. In those situations, because of the confidentiality at hand, the administrators may not be able to share all information about a case or situation with the school committee.**

**School Committees also experience problems managing the utilization of their legal counsel. Most boards will establish a policy requiring that contact with district legal counsel be authorized by the chair or be limited to stated criteria. Without this important management control, individual members can incur significant charges for legal services that may duplicate the efforts of others or which may not be worth the time, energy and cost.**

## **MAKING MEETINGS PURPOSEFUL**

In her recent book, "The Essential School Board Book," Nancy Walser cites "varied, purposeful meetings" as a key strategy that School Committees use to focus on student achievement. One Massachusetts district scheduled one academic presentation every month with clear instructions for the superintendent, department heads, and principals that each session must focus on what they are doing to improve student achievement, rather than a "vanity session" to promote individual educators or to exploit someone's agenda.

For example, the music educators were instructed unambiguously to present their program in a way that made the link between music and student achievement: through the skill building of listening, reading, and repeating; understanding tone and timbre, composing; harmonizing and knowing musical intervals; memorizing; conducting; and understanding rhythms. The teachers presented and explained how each skill is different and how these individual skills challenged a different part of the thought process, stimulating the brain for the rest of the school day's diverse academic challenges. Video of student performances at various grade levels demonstrated their competence. The teachers then presented research that showed how their particular learning strategy had resulted in student

achievement that exceeded expectations based on similar cohorts. This was far more useful than simply putting children in front of the School Committee to sing a song or two.

Similarly, the physical education teachers and athletic coaches had to explain the direct link between their activities and curricula and learning as well as life skills, as opposed to having athletes parade through the room holding their recently won medals or trophies, as has been done elsewhere.

As noted above, however, the chair has a special responsibility to protect people from themselves, including the obligation to protect the privacy rights of students and faculty and to ensure that public discussion and debate are run in an orderly way.

### **STAFF CONTACT BY SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

**Contact between employees of the district and School Committee members is unavoidable. It is also perfectly appropriate in most cases. However, there are situations where contact with members of the faculty can be problematic. They include:**

- **Issuing directives to the faculty. School Committee members gain their authority acting as a board and not as individuals. Members do not have the authority to issue directives to faculty members who report to the principal, department heads or superintendent.**
- **Seeking information from faculty members. Asking for information that is more than routine can fall into this category as well, especially if faculty members must take time away from their duties to fulfill the requests.**
- **Dangerous conversations. This is America. Constituents have an unrestricted right to speak to you, and you to them. While you can speak to anyone you want, the conversations can be risky and you have no control over your words once they leave your mouth.**

**Because board members do not supervise faculty, they need to be careful that teachers or principals to whom you speak do not also abuse the ability to speak to you. Information you obtain from faculty members, like that you hear from parents, may not always be objective or accurate.**

**People may be intimidated by you as an elected official and may feel uncomfortable with a discussion. More importantly, what you actually say may not be what the listener hears. For example, as careful as you may be about dealing with a problem presented by a teacher or parent, your considered response may be interpreted differently. Your promise to “refer this problem to the superintendent,” could be interpreted as “School Committee Member X is going right to the superintendent to be fixed right now.”**

## **SOCIAL MEDIA**

More and more, public officials make productive use of social media and the Internet vehicles to reach out to their constituents with public information, including opinions. Generally, these are unrestricted vehicles for communication provided that you do not distribute legally confidential information. Elected officials have an unrestricted right to use their personal Internet or e-mail accounts to establish blogs, social media sites, or other vehicles. However, they should be mindful that:

- All communication made electronically in your capacity as a public official can be considered public even when you are using your personal e-mail account or blog. This includes responding to constituents with your personal, rather than public, e-mail account.
- Using social media to mobilize opposition to your colleagues or to undermine their credibility, while allowable under the principles of free speech, may undermine your ability to serve effectively with them on the board.
- While public figures like elected officials, including the School Committee, are subject to the most outrageous criticism and attack in various forms of media, most of the school district employees are not public figures and comments constituting libel or slander could result in action against the public office holder. (In addition to elected officials, the superintendent is a public figure.)

School Committee members must be prepared to deal with the consequences of their blogs, Facebook pages, letters to editors, or other items distributed electronically. This may include losing the respect of your colleagues or diminishing your status with the public.

## **VANITY TIME**

Superintendents across the nation have begun to raise the problem of “vanity time,” or “vanity issues” which are tasks or responsibilities taken up because an individual person demands that they be raised or addressed. Anyone who has dealt with colleagues who “won’t change their mind and won’t change the subject” or who have plenty of time on their hands to think of tasks for others to do will understand this. Examples include:

- Issues and problems that are irrelevant to board work are referred to the superintendent for resolution in order to please a constituent or individual member.
- A member with a personal issue requires additional personal help from the superintendent. (MASC has been informed that a lot of irrelevant “research” is sometimes done on issues that someone is interested in.)
- E-mail requests from individuals to administrators that distract them from their key work.
- Cell phone callers who have no sense of urgency during a long drive while the receiver of the call is at work trying to complete tasks.



- **A bright new thought is pushed to center stage because someone just thought of it, and everyone must now participate in a discussion of an idea that is having its “15 minutes of fame” at your expense.**
- **Public comment period turns into a meeting agenda when someone else hijacks your meeting to turn the spotlight on a special issue.**
- **Or, worse, unhelpful amendments to motions are attached simply to shut someone up.**

## **PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

Most School Committees now host a public comment period where any member of the public is permitted to address the board. MASC has recommended several protocols for public comment period:

- Most importantly, all speakers must be recognized by the chair and should stop talking when their time is up as informed by the chair.
- Individuals should be limited to a set period of time, and usually three minutes is enough. The chair needs to be discreet in enforcing the time limit in order not to appear unreasonable, but the speakers must be respectful of others wishing to speak, or those who want to get to the meeting agenda. Remember, most speakers are indifferent to the time limits or the impact that repetition has upon listeners. They will generally speak to the limits of any time threshold. As a result, some chairs will ask people not to repeat what has already been said by another speaker.
- “Ad Hominem” attacks should be avoided. Public comment period is not a time to attack an individual.
- Some boards limit public comment to those items on the meeting agenda, while others allow any public comment. Your policy should clarify what is best for you.
- Individuals speaking should be informed that the School Committee will not respond, but will only listen and consider public commentary.
- The chair should prevent individuals from discussing information that is legally confidentially, including information about a particular child or faculty member.

## **SCHOOL COMMITTEE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Areas of Ambiguity: When the Lines Blur**

The lines that define the legal, legislative, and fiduciary responsibilities of the School Committee as well as the parameters that clarify the administrative and operational responsibilities of the superintendent of schools are sometimes unclear. The law gives the School Committee responsibilities over policy making which are broad in scope. Statutes also define the fiduciary responsibilities of the board over budget making and financial oversight. In addition, special statutes, including the collective bargaining laws as they link to public schools, provide special obligations and authority School Committees. However, when there is ambiguity, or varying circumstances and facts to go with them, the interpretations are not always clear.

Moreover, so many interpretations depend upon the particular facts or issues at hand. When, for example, is the line drawn over curriculum development when statute authorizes the School Committee to approve textbooks for use in schools but requires the superintendent to oversee day to day operations that would include drafting specific curriculum adaptations of the state's master frameworks to address local needs. Neither the law nor the occasional judicial interpretations resolve many complex and arguable questions over authority and obligation in these instances.

Further, there are instances where the law permits more aggressive involvement by the School Committee, but does not necessarily require it, leaving it to the board to delegate its power to its chief executive who may have the expertise to deal with it.

Some of the most frequent areas of role conflict include:

1. Budget Related issues (including budget development, approval, oversight, and line item transfers).
  - What you need to know?
  - How to develop an appropriate monitoring system?
2. Parent complaints that are brought to a school committee member.
3. School Committee member contact with School District Administration and Faculty.
  - *Principals*
  - *Teachers*
  - *Special Education Cases*
4. Anonymous Complaints Against Staff
5. Problem Principals or Administrators about whom there are Complaints (valid and invalid).
6. Setting the Meeting Agenda and/or Rules of Order
7. Personnel Decisions of the Superintendent and Administrators
  - *Hiring*
  - *Promoting*
  - *Assignments*
  - *Reorganizations/Staff Restructuring*
  - *Layoffs*
8. Crafting Policy (Initial Drafts and Working Documents)
9. Curriculum (Entire Sphere of Issues)
10. District Grading Systems
11. Communicating with the Public
12. Dealing with confidential information.
  - Information you want to know, but legally do not have to know.
13. Line Item Budget Management and Change During the Fiscal Year
  - Budget Development and Finance

14. Legal Counsel – Who’s the Client?
15. Use of School Facilities.
16. Opening or Closing a School
17. Collective bargaining: What is appropriate to bargain and what is off the table under the Education Reform Law.
18. Remediating grievances: who hears and/or resolves grievances and how.
19. Criticizing a public employee in public.
20. School Redistricting
21. Staff Restructuring.
22. School Committee meeting rules of order.
23. Hiring the Legal Counsel.
24. Handling or Receiving Confidential Information.