

Servant of the Assembly: Role of the Chair

MASC/MASS Joint Conference

November 2024



INTRODUCTION

Servant of the Assembly

First Among Equals

Chief Volunteer



John Carver



Describes the job of Chair as one that:

- “requires skilled handling of group process;
- an ability to lead a group fairly but firmly;
- an ability to confront and even to welcome diversity; and
- An ability to adhere to agreed-upon rules for board conduct.”

More Than Presiding

- Takes Time
- Attention to Detail
- Leadership Skills
- Interpersonal Skills
- Communication Skills
- Knowledge of the Legal Obligations
 - Open Meeting Law
 - Collective Bargaining
 - Conflict of Interest



Chair Responsibilities

- Guide the Committee's work
- Keep the Committee organized
- Focus on Mission, Vision and Goals
- Student Achievement
- Share leadership responsibilities
- Help the Committee be greater than the sum of its parts



Before Meetings



- Developing & placing items on the agenda
- Maintain consistent agenda practices
- Getting questions answered before the meeting
- Receiving supporting material before the meeting

So... Consider adopting Operating Protocols

Operating Protocols Are:



- ✓ A set of ground rules create, maintained and periodically revised by Committee members and the Superintendent
- ✓ Set of common preconditions that enable groups of people to work together civilly and productively
- ✓ A document that can be used for Committee self-evaluation

Operating Protocols Are NOT:

- ❌ A way to stifle dissent or disagreement
- ❌ A way to suppress free speech
- ❌ A way for the majority to control the minority
- ❌ A way to control information
- ❌ A way to limit communication beyond the Open Meeting Law



Operating Protocols Should Include:

- ❑ **Statement of purpose and objectives**
- ❑ **Conduct of business**
- ❑ **Scope of responsibilities**
- ❑ **Standards of conduct**
- ❑ **Staying on track**



Considerations Around Communication Pathways:

- ❑ **Emails to the Committee or to individual members**
 - ❑ **Chain of Command (communication)**
 - ❑ **Committee policy (spokesperson)**

- ❑ **Social media posts**
 - ❑ **District vs. Non-district**
 - ❑ **Personal postings**

- ❑ **Board member role in public**
 - ❑ **Committee policy**



OP Next Steps:

- Announce that the Committee has adopted protocols following “best practice” for effective School Committees seeking to raise student achievement.
- Post protocols on the School Committee website and have them available for those attending Committee meetings.
- Do a protocol “check-in” several times a year. Answer the question, “Are we doing what we said we would?”
- Re-examine and re-commit to the protocols after each election. Be sure that new members understand and are included in the commitments.
- Remind one another when things get off track. The Chair can be made responsible for speaking to anyone violating these commitments.

Westford School Committee/Superintendent Operating Protocols for 2023-2024 School Year

For the purpose of promoting effective governance and enhancing teamwork, we, the Superintendent and the members of the Westford School Committee, adopt the following operating protocols:

How We Serve Our Schools

- We represent the needs and interests of all our students in the District, and those needs and interests are primary in the decisions we make. We are committed to creating opportunities to listen to members of the community so that we may better understand the needs of our students and our families.
- We will foster an environment of trust, respect, and inclusivity; and we will model this in our interactions with one another, administration, staff, students, town officials, and members of the public.
- The Superintendent is responsible for the day-to-day management of the District and for overseeing personnel issues. The School Committee is responsible for setting policy for the District, approving the budget, and evaluating the Superintendent. We collaborate in setting the vision and goals for the District.

How Our Meetings Work


- We acknowledge that a School Committee meeting is a business meeting held in public—not a public meeting. We will make every effort to ensure that meetings are effective and efficient.
- We will conduct business through a descriptive agenda that appropriately notifies the public in a timely manner of what will be discussed at the meeting. Each meeting's packet will be made available online prior to the meeting and will contain supporting documents for the business before the Committee.
- The School Committee welcomes community members to attend our meetings and to speak on matters within its purview. To promote equitable opportunities to be heard, speakers will be limited to two minutes in their comments. The overall duration of the public comment period will be predetermined on the meeting agenda, but may be extended at the discretion of the Chair.

How We Communicate

- We recognize the importance of proactive communication, with the intent of avoiding surprises for either the School Committee or the Superintendent. If School Committee members have significant questions or concerns, they agree to contact the Superintendent and School Committee Chair well in advance of a meeting.
- School Committee members will channel requests for information through the Superintendent and School Committee Chair, rather than directly to staff. The Superintendent will ensure that each member has equal access to any response to Committee inquiries.
- Committee members will refer any important questions or concerns received from members of the community to the Superintendent. It is not the role of the School Committee or any of its members to resolve individual issues.
- Members of the public may contact all of the members of the School Committee by sending an email to school-committee@westfordma.gov. Please note that emails to and from the Committee are part of the public record. Whenever possible, the Chair will respond on behalf of the Committee.

By signing below, we recognize the importance of honoring these agreed upon protocols; and we commit to engage in self-reflection and continued improvement, not only in how we operate, but how we collaborate and communicate with one another.



Dr. Christopher Chew


Kathryn Clear


Marisol Garcia


Sean Kelly


Bill McDonald


Chris Sanders


Valery Young


Mingquan Zheng

**Signed by all Members
AND the Superintendent.** 

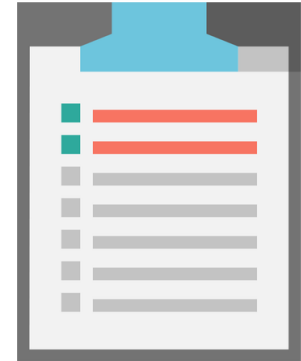
Agenda Best Practices:



- ❑ **Establish consistent agenda process**
- ❑ **Be clear about timelines for requests and posting**
- ❑ **Create an informative and unified agenda template for all committee and subcommittee meetings**

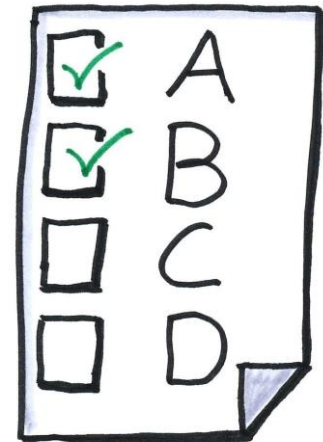
Agenda Format: Must Haves

- Name of the Committee
- Date, and starting time of meeting
- Location of meeting
- Remote access instructions as needed
- List of Topics the Chair reasonably anticipates will be discussed - must be a specific, itemized list so the public will understand what will be discussed and which items a vote is anticipated to be taken at the meeting.
- If the committee will be entering an executive session, the reason and whether the committee will return to public session.



Agenda Format: Optional Items

- **Consent agenda**
- **Time estimates**
- **Relationship to goals**
- **Subcommittee reports**



Additionally, the Superintendent and Chair should discuss guidelines for student and staff presentations.

Search Agenda

1. Meeting Opening

- A. Roll Call
- B. Public Comments on the Agenda (approx. 7:05 pm)

2. Recognitions and Achievements

- A. Recognition of MPY Poster Project Winners
- B. Student/Athlete/Employee of the Month Recognitions
- C. Student Representative Report

3. Consent Agenda

- A. Review of the February 2024 Accounts Payable and Payroll Warrant reports

4. Action Items

- A. Minutes of the Working Session on the FY25 Budget of January 30, 2024.
- B. Minutes of the Public Hearing on the FY25 Budget of February 6, 2024.
- C. Minutes of Regular School Committee Meeting of February 6, 2024.
- D. Approval of Items over \$50,000
- E. Approval of Update to Admissions Policy 2024-2025 JF (added to agenda unanticipated 48 hours, 3/12/24 at 11:10 am)

5. Principal's Report

- A. Cluster Chair Presentation
- B. SkillsUSA District Competition Kick Off



Agenda Item Details

Meeting	Mar 12, 2024 - School Committee Meeting at 7:00 PM - (posted on 3/8/24 at 5:15 PM)
Category	Action Items
Subject	Minutes of the Working Session on the FY25 Budget of January 30, 2024.
Access	Public
Type	Action, Minutes
Recommended Action	Move to approve the minutes of the Working Session on the FY25 Budget of January 30, 2024
Minutes	View Minutes for Jan 30, 2024 - Working Session on the Budget 7:00PM (posted on 1.
Goals	District Strategy Strategic Objective 3: Supporting Operational Effectiveness



Public Content

Administrative Content

Executive Content

Motion & Voting

★ Move to approve the minutes of the Working Session on the FY25 Budget of January 30, 2024

Motion by Karen Chapman - Townsend, second by Chris Prehl - Ayer.
Final Resolution: Motion Carries
Yea: Brian Fulmer - Shirley, Chris Prehl - Ayer, Lawrence MacDonald - Chelmsford, Robert Flynn - Groton, Samuel Poulten - Chelmsford, Sheldon Chapman - Townsend, Alicia Mallon - Westford, Karen Chapman - Townsend, Charlie Ellis - Littleton, Pat Wojtas - Chelmsford, Paula Baldassari - Pepperell

Linking agenda items to Superintendent/Committee goals keeps everyone focused and makes evaluations easier.

<u>(5.25.16)</u>	<u>Agenda Item</u>	<u>Time Alloc.</u>	<u>Category</u>	<u>Action***</u>
11-Jan	Inauguration and Swearing In of City of Melrose Officials	1.5 hrs	Joint	As noted in program
12-Jan	6:45 HS Students 7:00 Formal Election of SC Chair/Vice-Chair School Committee Spotlight - Lincoln School MS School Choice Technology Plan Minutes/Fld Trips/Maint/Personnel/Budget Summary/Warrants BOY Subcommittee Statements Special Education Staff MHS Past (< 2 yrs.) Class Funds Policy Subcommittee Assignments and Liaison Positions SC Norms Liaison Reports Action Item Progress Report	15 5 10 5 5 5 5 15 5 5 5 5 30 5 10	Chair Supt Supt Supt Supt Consent Each EPP FF PP Chair Chair Chair Chair	Meeting As required in By-Laws One school each month Vote on Public Hearing Report: rollout Vote Report: subcomm plans for the year Vote Report: review of process Vote: 1st reading Announce subcomms/vote liaison positions Facilitation by D. Presser (MASC) Report: member participation Report: progress, etc.
26-Jan	6:00 ES - Deployment of Security 7:00 SEEM Annual Report Minutes/Warrants/Revolving Accts/Policy (2nd Rdg) BOY EP&P Subcommittee statement MHS - Tuition based Foreign Students FY17 Budget Message FY16 Mid-Year Budget Update Rolling Agenda Liaison Assignments Proposed Revised Norms Committee Calendar: Add EP&P Subcomm+Mar/Apr Budget Mtgs. Liaison Reports	55 10 5 5 15 30 5 5 5 10 5 5	Chair Supt Consent EPP EPP FF FF Chair Chair Chair Chair Chair Chair	xxx Report Vote Report: EP&P subcomm's 2016 plans Report: (spkrs) Report: per Budget Timeline Vote Report Report Vote Vote Report: member participation
9-Feb	7:00 MVMMS School Choice School Committee Spotlight - Roosevelt School Minutes/Field Trips/Cafeteria/Personnel/Budget Summ/Warrants School Business Official Position OCR Compliance Campus Kids Fees Updated Budget Timeline Committee Calendar: Add EP&P Meetings Proposed Revised Norms Liaison Reports Action Item Progress Report including Glossary ES: Discuss Strategy with Respect to Collective Bargaining ES: Minutes of 12/8 & 1/26 Meetings	15 10 5 10 10 15 10 5 15 5 5 10 5	Chair Supt Consent EPP EPP FF FF Chair Chair Chair Chair Chair Chair	Public Hearing One school each month (spkrs) Vote Report: process and timeline Report: training, etc. Vote (spkr) Report: discussion dates/topics Vote Vote Report: member participation Report: progress, etc. xx Vote



Clearly defined actions on agendas help stakeholders know what is informational and what requires committee votes.



At the Meeting

- Committee room layout
- Length of meetings
- Public comment
- Staff presentations



At the Meeting

- Deliberations at meetings
- Springing surprise items or questions
- Bringing up new ideas
- Technology devices at meeting table
- Allowing majority to set direction for the district



Between Meetings



- Individual members requesting information or action from the superintendent
- Individual members requesting information or action from staff
- SC/Superintendent communication between meetings
- SC member communication between meetings
- Balancing member responsibilities between meetings

Between Meetings



- Member role in public
- Handling complaints and communications from constituents
- Engaging the community
- Social media
- Chain of Communications
- Handling confidential information
- School visits

Additional things to consider:

- A Public Comment Statement
- Annual Operating Protocol discussion and adoption
- School Committee evaluation and goal setting
- Regular governance tune-up workshops



