Ipswich School Committee

Thursday, March 21, 2024 MS/HS Ensemble Room 134 High Street, Ipswich 7:00 PM

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

KE called the meeting to order.

Present:	D. Freehan (DF)	M. Perry (MP)
	J. Donahue (JD)	J. Connolly (JC)
	S. Sopic (SS)	K. Eliot (KE)

Also Present: Dr. Brian Blake, Superintendent of Schools (BB) Tom Markham, Director of Finance and Operations (TM)

2. Reading of the District Mission Statement

JD read the mission statement.

3. Announcements

- The next School Committee meeting will be held on Thursday, April 4th at 7:00 PM in the MS/HS Ensemble Room.
- Negotiations with the Ipswich Educators Association will be held on Wednesday, March 27th at 4:30 PM.
- The Feoffees Policy Working Group meeting will be held on March 27th at 7:00 PM.

4. Special Acknowledgements

BB acknowledged the winter athletes. BB then acknowledged the work of students and staff at StringFest.

5. Remarks from the Chair

There were no remarks from the Chair.

6. Public Comments¹

There were no public comments.

7. High School Student Representative Report

No report was presented.

8. Presentations

A. Winter Sports Awards

High School Athletic Director, Tom Gallagher, recognized the students that participated in winter sports this year and their accomplishments throughout the season.

B. Overnight Field Trip Request: New England Robotics Championships

Members of the High School Robotics Team presented a request to the New England Robotics Championship in Springfield, MA from Wednesday, April 3, 2024 through Saturday, April 6, 2024. Families will be responsible for the cost of food and lodging which is roughly \$400 per student. Scholarships will be offered to families who may not be able to cover the cost of the trip. The

¹ Public comment is not a discussion, debate, or dialogue between individuals and the School Committee. It is an individual's opportunity to express an opinion on issues within the School Committee's authority. While the Committee and/or administrators will not typically respond during Public Comment, the Chair, as presiding officer of the meeting, may choose to if s/he seems it expeditious. Further, should the Chair believe that an issue falls outside the purview of the School Committee, s/he may request that citizens direct it to the appropriate person or body so that the matter is given proper consideration. Public comment is limited to three (3) minutes per person and a total of 15 minutes, overall.

team estimates that 16 students will attend the competition with 5 mentors. Mentors are considered chaperones that have been CORId and fingerprinted.

Motion to approve the overnight field trip for the Robotics Team from April 3-April 6th was made by SS and seconded by DF. The motion passed unanimously in favor.

C. DEI Committee Presentation

BB first gave a brief introduction to the presentation, noting the DEI work that has been accomplished throughout the district. BB also mentioned that he has been participating in DEI work with superintendents across Massachusetts through the Race, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion group.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Team Vision Statement

As the IPS Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee, we believe that a community is stronger together. Our vision is to create a district of learners dedicated to amplifying marginalized voices. We will prepare students to become compassionate and active global citizens. We will celebrate the diversity within and beyond our community while confronting issues of equity and inclusion in our practices and learning environments.

District-wide DEI Team

Who are we?

- Representatives from each school and Central Office
- Student representatives from IHS

What do we do?

- Attend monthly team meetings to check in and support each other
- Facilitate school-based teams with teachers and students as is age-appropriate

Why?

- To support each other, our schools, and our district in meeting the needs of all students
- To work towards the Strategy for District Improvement goal of "Building best practices to support diversity, equity, and inclusion: IPS will ensure that all students will be prepared to face the challenges presented by an increasingly complex world that is more diverse than our immediate learning community."

Snapshot of District-wide DEI History

- Educator interest and Professional Learning Communities (PLC's)
- Speakers, books and consultants
- District-wide DEI Team
- No Place for Hate
- Responsive Classroom (elementary) & Restorative Justice Circles (secondary)
- Deepening the work

Winthrop School

2022-2023 School Year

- Formed our school-based NPFH group (teachers and students)
- Participated in a school-wide NPFH activity on identity

2023-2024 School Year

- Continued our school-based NPFH group (teachers and students)
- Participating in three school-wide NPFH activities (ongoing) on identity, identity-based bullying, and stereotypes

Paul F. Doyon Elementary School

2022-2023 School Year

- Formed NPFH group and signed the pledge
- Conducted K-2 and 3-5 climate surveys
- One School Read of Dream Street

2023-2024 School Year

- No Place for Hate and Women's history Month Posters
- School-Wide community art installation
- Identity Read Alouds and Activity- 5th Grade readers in K-2 classrooms
- Classroom Tote Bags of picture books to amplify diverse voices in the classrooms

Ipswich Middle School

2022 - 2023

- NPFH Activity #1: Identity Icebergs
- NPFH Activity #2: Anti-Bullying
- NPFH Activity #3: Food Insecurity & Equity
- Use of Restorative Justice Circles for conversations
- NPFH Spotlight School

2023 - 2024

- T.I.D.E. Club Tigers for Inclusion, Diversity, & Equity
 - Increasing student involvement
- TWIG Grants for Restorative Justice Tier 1 Trainings
 - 20 IMS Students
 - 13 IMS Staff Members
- Mass Partnerships for Youth Positive School Community Assembly
 - Follow up Restorative Circles

Ipswich High School

2022-2023

• Culture Survey, hosted a few Restorative Circles, and created the No Hate Crate

2023-2024

- Heritage Months: Educational Materials shared via Bulletin Board & Slides; Restorative Circles; Fundraising/Service.
- NP4H Activity #1: two part series on Identity & Culture
- NP4H Activity #2: Culture Fest
- NP4H Activity #3: Culture Survey \rightarrow Series on Microaggressions

Thinking Forward

- How do we know we're making an impact?
- Continuing with the District-wide DEI Team
- Supporting school-based DEI Teams and groups
- Developing leadership roles for students
- Growing "No Place for Hate" designations
- Thinking about transitions between grades 5 and 6, and grades 8 and 9

Questions:

SS said he liked seeing the consistent themes across the schools. SS wondered if there were connections between teachers and students across the different schools. Ms. Wagner felt that was an area to grow on next year.

JC acknowledged how important it is to include and respect all voices, as well as make sure that stereotypes are not used to bully someone who may have different ideas or values from your own. JC asked where she could find the list of books that are included in the totebags distributed at Doyon. Mr. Holtz said he would share that information. It was also noted that No Place for Hate, in partnership with the ADL, has an extensive list of age appropriate books covering DEI topics.

KE said she appreciated the thoughtful development of activities and the involvement of the students. KE also loved seeing the positive effects on both students and staff. BB added that one of the goals of the group was to grow the student voice. BB noted there was room to grow and change as different issues come up and different conversations happen.

SS asked what might apply to the School Committee that they could or should participate in.

D. Student Opportunity Act Review/Approval

Tracy Wagner, Director of Teaching and Learning, shared paper copies of the Student Opportunity Act (SOA). This document is a requirement of the most recent Chapter 70 legislation. Districts have to show how they are using Chapter 70 funding on the most needy students. The state defines most of the process. This is a three year plan that needs to be approved by the School Committee and then submitted to the state for approval. Over the following three years, you need to submit evidence back to the state on how the plan is going.

The state gives a template to complete and lists the data that needs to be reviewed. The district reviewed MCAS data in grades 3, 5, 8 and 10. A subgroup needs to be identified from that MCAS data as not performing the same as other students. Dr. Wagner noted that the MCAS data that was reviewed was across multiple years. It was clear that the trend across MCAS data was that the low income students, 20% of the total school population, were scoring differently compared to all students in MCAS. When they dug into the data, it was discovered that in grades 3 and 5, there was a big gap between low income students and all other students. Interestingly, the gap closed in grade 8 and then opened again even wider in grade 10.

In proposing a plan back to the state to address this gap, Ipswich is taking a close look at the school improvement plans and strategy for district improvement. The Student Opportunity Act document before the School Committee outlines how the district is going to close the gaps. The plan talks about using tiered interventions to help students in a classroom who are learning at different levels and have different levels of need. The District will also use a new English Language Arts curriculum, a literacy coach, and literacy leads to help close the gap at the elementary level. At the middle school level, the principal proposes using paraeducators in some after school time to do additional tutoring for students. At the high school level, there will be an additional class for students who need additional support for MCAS, run by a teacher in the English department. There is also a special math course for English Language Learners. There are also requirements in the SOA to ensure that the district aligns with Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion work.

Dr. Wagner discussed the process on how the SOA was created and reviewed. The last step of the process is to obtain School Committee approval.

KE asked what the historic gaps have been, pre-pandemic. Dr. Wagner said she was more familiar with more recent data, but can remember that it has often been around low income students, which encompasses different demographics of students.

Dr. Wagner talked about the math program for ELL students in the middle and high schools. She noted the tremendous improvements to math MCAS scores from students participating in the course.

Motion to approve the Student Opportunity Act planned submission as presented on March 21, 2024 was made by KE and seconded by JC. The motion passed unanimously in favor.

E. Pedestrian and Cycling Advisory Board Presentation (Taken out of order)

The Co-Chairs of the Pedestrian and Cycling Advisory Board (PCAB) said the group had been created about two years ago following a number of cyclist deaths in town. The committee has a narrow focus of design review, mostly working with DPW. The group also assists with planning and would like to begin to focus more on grant writing. The goal is to provide safe movement through Ipswich for those not in cars. The focus has mostly been on the student-aged population. The Co-Chairs talked about the projects that have been recently reviewed and upcoming projects. The School Committee was invited to participate in the reviews in some capacity and was encouraged to establish a partnership with the PCAB. There are a large number of grants that the PCAB could be applying for with a partnership with the schools.

KE asked if the PCAB had a sense of what types of grants have been funded or could be funded. It was explained that grants can fund infrastructure adjacent to schools or fund safety concerns around vulnerable populations. Grants could help with safety studies for roadways that take walkers and cyclists into consideration.

The PCAB talk about what's to come in Ipswich, sharing that it is a "transformative time".

KE asked if the PCAB is advocating for their own issues or are they piggy backing on things that are happening in town, bringing their own perspective. PCAB said that projects come to the group when working with the Town. The group advocates for adults who are walking and biking, seniors who may have mobility issues, and also school-aged kids. Particularly for Safe Routes to School, there are opportunities to chase grants or host activities that are not specifically tied to Town projects.

SS asked the group to talk about the need for the Town to collect student walking/biking data and where that is coming from. It was explained that two students came to the group regarding a Civics project. It was suggested that the students look at where students would like to walk and where they are currently walking.

DF asked when PCAB would like School Committee/school involvement to start. PCAB said that reviews come in bursts and are typically unpredictable. The easiest thing to do is for the group to get in touch with the School Committee when the next review takes place and ask for a member to participate in the meeting. Meetings are held once a month for an hour.

SS likes that a partnership with the schools helps to better the PCAB's position to secure grants and funding and advance the work they are doing. SS thought this could connect to the work of the School Facilities Working Group. KE thought that if someone was going to the meetings to be an official voice of the School Committee, they should be a liaison in an official capacity, similarly to how School Committee members are liaisons to other town committees and boards.

BB added that the schools are connected to the Safe Routes to School program.

F. Discussion/Appointment of Whittier Tech School Committee Member

KE shared that Gary James, the current Whittier School Committee representative whose term is expiring, had previously expressed interest in continuing to serve in that role. The School Committee also received a letter of interest from Carol Sullivan. The two candidates were interviewed at the last School Committee meeting. Mr. James has since submitted a letter of resignation to Dr. Blake effective the end of his current term on March 31, 2024 and has withdrawn his name from consideration for the next term as School Committee.

Members of the School Committee were then asked to share their thoughts on Carol Sullivan's experience and qualifications to be the new Whittier Tech School Committee member. Members felt she had a good knowledge of vocational schools and that she had good ideas for communication with the School Committee and the community. Members appreciated how she would work with the Town moving forward and felt she interviewed well. Overall, she seemed proactive, had a lot of positive energy and experience.

Motion to appoint Carol Sullivan to the Whittier Tech School Committee as of April 1, 2024 for a three year term was made by JC and seconded by JD. The motion passed unanimously in favor.

G. Discussion/Authorization to Submit Statement of Interest to the Massachusetts School Building Authority

SS began this discussion by reviewing the Statement of Interest (SOI) development process. Schools Committee members presented the two SOIs at the most recent Select Board meeting and received approval to authorize the superintendent to submit the two SOIs to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA). The School Committee must also vote to authorize the superintendent to submit the two SOIs to the MSBA. There will be two separate motions, one for Winthrop and one for Doyon. The SOIs are due to MSBA on April 12th. KE clarified that the vote tonight was not on the contents of the SOI, but to authorize the superintendent to submit the SOIs to the MSBA.

SS summarized the vote language, specifically required by the MSBA. The vote states that they are submitting SOIs for:

- Priority 2: Elimination of severe overcrowding;
- Priority 5: Replacement, renovation, or modernization of school facility systems; and
- Priority 7: Replacement of or addition to obsolete buildings

JD asked for a discussion before voting on the authorization to submit these SOIs. JD said that people felt differently about prioritization and that she had asked for a discussion to be put on the agenda and it was not. There were differences of opinion from School Committee members at the last meeting and without a full body of the School Committee, JD would like to continue a discussion on the different thoughts of prioritization. JD shared concerns about repeating the same steps the School Committee took during the last SOI submission and seeing "history repeat itself".

KE said there were two issues that should be separated. The priority school discussion was part of the contents of the SOIs. The vote needed tonight was to authorize the superintendent to submit. KE did not want to send a message that the School Committee was voting on the contents of the SOIs at this meeting, or at all. The School Committee could continue to discuss the priority school, but KE felt it was important to also take the vote to submit the SOIs at this meeting.

JC felt conflicted with Winthrop being identified as the priority school. While the submission of the SOIs fell to the superintendent, JC thought it was important for BB to hear the different viewpoints of the School Committee in regard to the priority school. JC said she felt strongly that Doyon should be the priority school because it could keep the options open for both one school or two schools. Doyon has also not been identified as a priority school in either of the two previous SOI submissions.

KE asked members if they were opposed to authorizing the superintendent to submit two SOIs to the MSBA. MP asked if it was possible to have a discussion on the priority school even if the School Committee votes to authorize the submission of the SOIs at tonight's meeting. JC asked if the School Committee were to vote to authorize the submission of the two SOIs, how would the School Committee then have a say on what the contents of the SOI are. SS clarified that the language in the vote to authorize to submit is determined by the MSBA. DF said that to direct BB to do something operational is beyond the scope of the School Committee.

KE again asked if anyone was opposed to authorizing BB to submit two SOIs to the MSBA. JD said she would like to have more conversation with clarity on prioritization of school, and more clarity from the MSBA. JD said her opinion differed on how schools get accepted and how schools are prioritized. JD felt the School Committee could have a stronger vote with clarity and more discussion at the next School Committee meeting. In an effort to address the agenda item, KE asked if the discussion would change JD's decision to vote to authorize the submission of the two SOIs. JD said she would not be comfortable voting on

authorization until she had confirmation that there would be a discussion at the next School Committee meeting on prioritization and clarity from the MSBA on not just need, but direction.

KE said she was not opposed to having a brief discussion at their next meeting, but wanted to make it clear that the School Committee would not be voting on prioritization. That decision is out of the scope of the School Committee and no other content/language was voted on.

JC said she would also feel better on getting more clarification. Waiting to learn more about the decision making process when determining the priority school. DF said that the document and the decision was the superintendent's to make. The decision was based on need and the need was determined by conversations with the Facilities Director.

JD said she was recalling a battle the town went through when the original building project. JD felt the town had already decided that a small new school at Winthrop or a combined school at Winthrop was not what they wanted. Choosing Winthrop as the priority school again, would have the same outcome as before. JD talked about the phone call with the MSBA last year and then again in the fall, when the MSBA asked what was different this time around. JD felt nothing was done differently this time around.

KE said she categorically disagreed with that statement and felt the School Committee has done many things differently. KE felt the MSBA was not implying something needed to be different on the SOI. Nothing about the SOIs from last year was insufficient. Ipswich simply did not get accepted, which KE said happens to a majority of districts that apply. KE felt that the MSBA wanted to know what the town has done differently to "move the needle forward", not what has changed in the SOIs.

JD said that the School Committee has learned, through the ballot vote and listening sessions, that a majority of people would like a consolidated school at Doyon. JD asked why the School Committee wouldn't then choose Doyon as the priority school. SS thought JD was inflating the difference in the town and where a future school would be built with authorization to submit to get MSBA funding. SS felt those were two separate, independent conversations.

DF asked how to move the conversation forward. JD then made a motion that at the next School Committee meeting, there is a discussion on prioritization and the process of the superintendent and the School Committee from the MSBA. JD wanted specific guidance from the MSBA on prioritization and School Committee input. SS asked what the outcome of that conversation would be. JD said that while it is the superintendent's document, every School Committee member has the SOI in its most recent draft. If the School Committee is not involved, why do they have access to the information? SS again shared that the vote tonight was on the authorization to submit the document, not School Committee approval of the contents of the documents.

JD said she wants to have a strong application, stating that everyone wants acceptance into the program. JD said she was not alone in feeling that Doyon should be prioritized.

JC asked for clarification on whether JD wanted to discuss the authorization vote in more detail at the next meeting or focus the discussion on the prioritization of schools. The purpose of the conversation on April 4th is to ensure the School Committee can have some clarity and conversation on prioritization.

Motion to have a discussion on prioritization and the process of the Superintendent and School Committee at the next School Committee meeting on April 4th was made by JD and seconded by JC. The motion failed in a tie vote with 3 yes and 3 no.

SS then read the Winthrop authorization vote language. KE asked if April 4th would be too late to take a vote to authorize the submission of the two SOIs. SS clarified that the intention of tonight's agenda item was to take a vote. BB added that taking a vote on April 4th will allow five days to upload the final SOIs to the MSBA portal.

KE, again, stressed that the votes tonight were to authorize the superintendent to submit the two SOIs to the MSBA. JD said that she would like to wait until April 4th to take a vote. JC also expressed her preference to vote at the April 4th meeting.

DF asked BB what would change between this meeting and the meeting on April 4th with regard to the two SOIs. BB said that the only thing that would change would be if the MSBA clarified that a priority school could be identified that was not the building in the worst shape. DF questioned whether it would be reckless to not address Winthrop needs first knowing that Winthrop has been identified as being in worse shape. SS asked members if, based on reading the report from the Facilities Director, they agreed that Winthrop is in worse shape.

JD said she had questions about the MSBA process and wanted clarity to go forward confidently and unanimously, by specifically addressing what the criteria for acceptance was. Both KE and SS felt that criteria was based on need and urgency, based on information located on the MSBA website. JD said she would feel more comfortable supporting Winthrop as a priority if the MSBA came back and said the identification of a priority school should be based solely on need.

BB said that other superintendents that he's spoken to have said that the SOIs are based on the needs of the buildings. If you could only build one building, which one is the neediest. BB felt that Winthrop was the neediest and needed to be replaced first. JD felt it was important to her to hear that information directly from the MSBA.

The discussion continued around whether BB could make changes to the SOI once the School Committee voted to authorize him to submit the two SOIs. DF reminded members that ultimately, the documents were submitted by the superintendent. JD said that the writing of the SOIs was a collaborative effort.

JD once again said she did not see the harm in waiting to take a vote on April 4th once they have an absolute answer as to prioritization. KE asked what would happen if the School Committee was unable to get clarity from the MSBA. KE said her concern was that the School Committee has heard from the superintendent and facilities professionals, who know the buildings the best, that Winthrop is in worse shape. KE said she was elected to do what is in the best interest of all students. KE asked how the School Committee could ethically entertain a solution that does not address the building that is most likely to fail first.

SS said that a conversation around configuration should absolutely happen and could be done at the April 4th meeting. Tonight's vote to authorize the submission of the two SOIs should still take place to move the process forward. JD added that the committee implied with the failed vote earlier in the meeting, that they did not want to discuss prioritization at their next meeting. JD said that she does not want to go down the same road as the last failed project and wanted to give the town more options to best support all students.

SS said that if the concern is that the School Committee is truly missing the intention of the questions in the SOI and what is intended to be submitted, then he would be willing to rescind his motion. SS said that would be very different from talking about the school location/configuration. JD said, again, that she wanted clarity on prioritization and the committee would be better served to authorize a vote to submit the SOIs with that clarity from the MSBA.

JC asked that if the School Committee were to vote to authorize the superintendent to submit the SOIs at this meeting, would there still be time to discuss the prioritization at the next meeting. Understanding that it is ultimately the superintendent's document, JC thought it could be helpful for the School Committee to share their views on prioritization.

SS withdrew his original motion, seconded by DF.

SS asked for what, specifically, members would like to discuss at the next meeting. It was confirmed that someone would reach out to the MSBA for clarity from the MSBA and that a discussion on the MSBA response would take place at the next meeting ahead of the vote to authorize the superintendent to submit the SOIs.

DF added that Amherst had been brought up a lot as a comparison when discussing the school building project and talked about the differences between their project/process and Ipswich.

H. Negotiations Update

The Negotiations Subcommittee met with Ipswich Educators' Association (IEA) bargaining committee on March 14th for their first meeting. Common proposals were presented that would apply to the IEA collective bargaining units. Four additional meetings have been scheduled.

I. Policy Review/Update

DF presented edits and updates to the following policies, first reviewed by the Policy Subcommittee:

- AC: Nondiscrimination
- ACAB: Sexual Harassment
- AE: Commitment to Accomplishment
- BA: School Committee Operations Goals
- BAA: Evaluation of the School Committee Operational Procedure
- BB: School Committee Legal Status
- BBA: School Committee Powers and Duties
- BBAA: School Committee Member Authority
- BBBA/BBBB: School Committee Member Qualifications/Oath of Office
- BBBC: School Committee Resignation
- BBBE: Unexpired Term Fulfillment
- BCA: School Committee Member Ethics
- BDA: School Committee Organizational Meeting
- AC-R: Non-Discrimination Policy
- GBEE: Personal Use of Technology
- Motion to approve policies in the folder for the March 21st School Committee meeting as edited was made by KE and seconded by SS. The motion passed unanimously in favor.

9. Superintendent's Administrative Report

BB's report included:

- YMCA Partnership meeting
- Athletic Director update
- North Shore Superintendents' Roundtable meeting
- IEA President meeting
- IEA negotiations
- FY25 Budget Presentation to the Finance Committee
- CREST Collaborative Board of Directors meeting
- Ipswich Aware meeting
- Parent meetings
- Meeting with Technology Director and Digital Learning Specialist
- Meeting with the Director of Teaching and Learning
- Comprehensive Health and PE Curriculum meeting
- Educator Evaluation Committee meeting
- Subcommittee meetings
- StringFest

10. Subcommittee, Working Group and Liaison Reports

- **Communications Subcommittee:** The current newsletter is available in the meeting folder for review. The subcommittee also discussed a community event members will be participating in.
- Feoffees Policy Working Group: needs to reschedule
- STEAM Team: The group met for an all day planning event for the STEAM Showcase.

• Climate Resilency Committee: Discussed the Specialized Stretch Code. Carl Nylen offered to give a presentation about this topic ahead of the School Committee's vote on warrant articles for Town Meeting. It was decided that it was not needed.

11. New Business*

No new business was presented.

12. Vouchers and Bills

All were reviewed and signed.

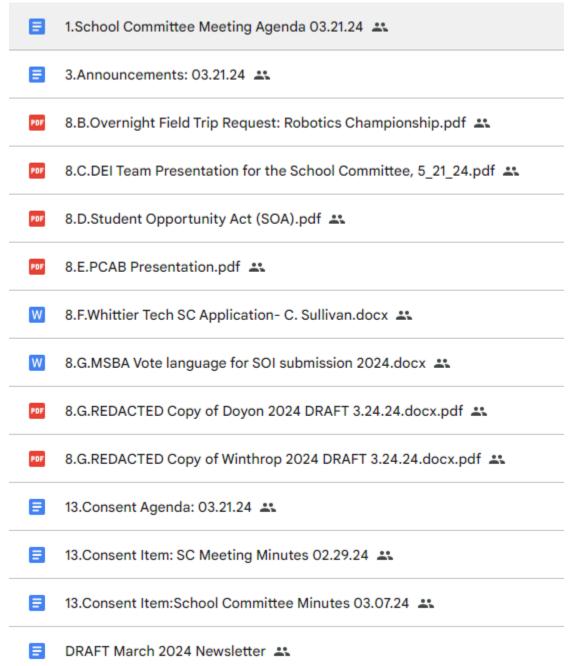
13. Consent Agenda

Motion to approve the consent agenda as presented was made by SS and seconded by JC. The motion passed unanimously in favor.

14. Adjournment

> Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by DF and seconded by JD. The motion passed unanimously in favor.

DOCUMENTS:



DOCUMENTS:

Copy of AC_ Nondiscrimination 2024.docx
Copy of ACAB_Sexual Harassment 2020.docx 🚢
Copy of AE_ Commitment to Accomplishment 2020.docx
🛛 Copy of File_BA_School Committee Operations Goals 2017.docx 🚢
Copy of File_BAA_Evaluation of School Committee Operational Procedures 2017.docx 🚢
🛛 Copy of File_BB_School Committee Legal Status 2017.docx 🚢
Copy of File_BBA_School Committee Powers and Duties 2020.docx 🚢
Copy of File_ BBAA_School Committee Member Authority 2020.docx 🚢
Copy of File_BBBA_BBBB_School Committee Member Qualifications_ Oath of Office 2017.docx 🚢
Copy of File_BBBC_School Committee Member Resignation 2017.docx 🚢
Copy of File_BBBE_Unexpired Term Fulfillment 2017.docx 🚢
Copy of File_BCA_School Committee Member Ethics 2020.docx
🛛 Copy of File_ BDA_ School Committee Organizational Meeting 2017.docx 🚢
File_AC-R_Non-Discrimination Policy L
GBEE _ Personnel Use of Technology AM