

# Regional School Unit 24



## Inaugural Retreat

### *Draft Meeting Report*

Saturday, April 4, 2009  
Sumner Memorial High School, Room 19  
Sullivan, Maine



**Good Group Decisions**

# Contents

<i>About the Meeting</i> .....	<i>1</i>
Attendance .....	1
Objectives.....	1
Retreat Materials .....	2
Agenda .....	2
Ground Rules.....	4
Welcome.....	5
<i>Four Corners</i> .....	5
Lessons Learned.....	6
<i>Interaction Guidelines</i> .....	7
Conclusions .....	7
Transparency and Information .....	7
Professionalism.....	7
Structure.....	8
Organized Answers.....	8
Discussion.....	9
<i>Meeting Protocols and Procedures</i> .....	14
Conclusions .....	14
Discussion.....	17
<i>Picture Challenge</i> .....	24
Lessons Learned .....	24
<i>Committee Organization and Membership</i> .....	25
Conclusions .....	25
Discussion.....	26
<i>Committee Operations</i> .....	29
Conclusions .....	29
Discussion.....	30
<i>Committee Mandates</i> .....	31
Conclusions .....	32
Discussion.....	32
<i>Closing Comments</i> .....	32

## **About the Meeting**

This retreat was an opportunity for the new Board of Directors of RSU 24 to get off to a great start, get to know each other and discuss how to work together. The focus of the retreat was to come to some general agreements, not to make any formal decisions. Decisions will be adopted at the next board meeting. To ensure an efficient process, Craig Freshely of Good Group Decisions was hired to facilitate the meeting and prepare a complete meeting report.

## **Attendance**

Bill Webster – Superintendent  
Mike Pinkham – Board Chair  
Rich Malaby – Board Member  
Alice Dow – Board Member  
Janet Wilpan – Board Member  
Geoff Zentz – Board Member  
Jamie Buteau – Board Member  
Jeff Alley – Board Member  
Julie Curtis – Board Member  
Annie Perry – Board Member  
Dick Gray – Board Member  
Jon Moren – Board Member  
Jenna Shorey – Board Member

## **Objectives**

- Understand key characteristics of high functioning groups and generally agree on specific attitudes and behaviors that will be helpful to our own highly effective functioning
- Discuss and generally agree on several aspects of meeting protocols, procedures and behaviors
- Generally agree on committees with written mandates, initial membership, and initial tasks for each committee
- Get to know each other and develop an outstanding foundation for positive working relations

## ***Retreat Materials***

Prior to the meeting, Bill Webster, Superintendent, sent the following materials to each board member:

1. Retreat Agenda
2. Supporting Material:
  - A. Board Meeting Protocols and Procedures
  - B. Possible Committees of the Board
  - C. Committee Meeting Protocols and Procedures
3. Attachment A-I Possible Board Meeting Agenda Format
4. Attachment A-II Possible Staff Report Format
5. Attachment B-I MSAD #3 Committee Policies

## ***Agenda***

Craig reviewed the following agenda for the day:

- 8:50           Arrival and refreshments
- 9:00           **Opening**  
                  Welcome  
                                  Michael Pinkham, Board Chair  
                                  Bill Webster, Superintendent  
                  About the Retreat  
                                  Craig Freshley, facilitator, will review the agenda and a  
                                  few ground rules  
                  Brief Introductions
- 9:20           **Four Corners**  
                  We will do a quick exercise designed to bring out our personality  
                  types. Which type are you? How about your colleagues? How do  
                  our personality styles affect how we work with each other?
- 9:40           **How to be a High Functioning Board of Directors**  
                  We will discuss characteristics of high functioning groups first in a  
                  general way and then specific to our own group, as follows:  
                  **1. Brainstorming – All Our Ideas**  
                                  Drawing from our own past experiences in working with  
                                  groups, we will each contribute ideas about what makes  
                                  groups work well. We will use a fun and dynamic

technique to get all our ideas up on the wall and organize them.

**2. Expert Opinion**

Craig will share with us a bit about what group process experts say on this topic - to add to our own ideas.

**3. Conclusions**

Based on what we have discussed, we will draw some conclusions about how WE intend to work together.

10:50        **Break**

11:10        **Meeting Protocols and Procedures**

This is an opportunity to discuss and come to general agreement on several aspects of how we conduct meetings and how we interact with each other in meetings. Topics will include: agenda setting procedures, room set up, agenda format, meeting schedule, distribution of meeting-related documents, etc. For simple topics, Bill Webster will provide us with a written recommendation which we expect to simply clarify. For more complex topics, we will discuss as a group and draw conclusions.

12:30        **Lunch**

1:00         **Communications Team Challenge**

We will do a fun, interactive exercise designed to teach us about communications. Craig will provide the group with an objective and some simple rules. Can you do it? Will certain people fall into certain roles? After the exercise we will debrief asking these four questions:

- What happened?
- Why did that happen?
- How is that like real life?
- What lessons from this can we apply to our work together?

1:35         **Committee Organization and Membership**

We will discuss and come to some general agreements about committees, as follows:

**1. General Discussion**

How are the committees of other school districts organized? What are some general thought about what types of committees are needed? Before designing our own committee structure, we will briefly discuss these and related questions.

**2. What do we need to work on?**

In brainstorming fashion we will each contribute ideas about what tasks need to be accomplished. We will organize the tasks on the wall and this will reveal a proposed committee structure.

### **3. Committee Names**

Based on the work that needs to be done and how it's organized, we will generally agree on what committees to have and what to call each one.

### **4. Membership**

Based on the work of each committee and the interests and abilities of each board member, we will make preliminary decisions about who should serve on each committee.

2:30           **Break**

2:50           **Committee Operations**

We will discuss and come to some general conclusions about:

- How committees relate to the board as a whole
- How committees are staffed and chaired
- How membership of each committee is decided, terms, etc.
- How committees communicate among members, between committees, with the staff, and with the board as a whole

3:25           **Committee Mandates**

Based on the discussion before the break, Craig will propose a written mandate for each committee. We will discuss, revise, and come to some general agreements.

3:45           **Closing Comments**

Each board member will have an opportunity to make a brief closing comment, perhaps a reflection about the meeting or perhaps a particular hope or concern going forward.

4:00           **Adjourn**

## ***Ground Rules***

Craig reviewed the following Ground Rules, things to keep in mind to help us have an efficient and productive meeting.

- We all have the answers. I am going to treat everyone in this room equally, and ask that you raise hands. I'll call on people who haven't said much. This is an open, inclusive process.
- Efficiency – Few distractions. Let's turn off cell phones and keep side conversations to a minimum.
- Stay on the high ground. We are not going to deal with details today. You have an excellent staff that will handle the details. Let's stay on the high ground.
- No decisions in a formal way today. Today you will come to some general conclusions, but there will be no formal decisions made.
- Flexible agenda. I am not going to march you through this agenda no matter what. If the group decides to do something different, we'll change it.
- Neutral facilitation and report. I don't have an opinion of what you are doing. I don't have any expertise in these topics. I am the process expert.

## **Welcome**

Michael Pinkham, Board Chair, welcomed the group to today's retreat, explaining that he hopes the group can get on an even keel with what we are going to do as an RSU.

Bill Webster, Superintendent, also welcomed the group, and thanked everyone for coming. He expressed appreciation for everyone's time, and thanked Craig and Amy for coming to help with the process.

## **Four Corners**

Craig led a quick exercise intended to help each board member understand his or her own personality type, as well as those of others on the board. If you understand the personality type of the people you work with, you can make a better team. You can better understand why others act a certain way, and why you react in a certain way.

Many of you have probably taken a Myers Briggs test or something similar before. Most systems of identifying personality types are based on four different styles, going all the way back to medieval times with the four cardinal humors – choleric, sanguine, melancholic, and phlegmatic. While our styles tend to be well developed by the time we are adolescents, we can learn to accept and work with our own styles.

Here is the exercise. Imagine you are in a meeting. You've gone over time. Tensions are high. Decisions have not been made. In that situation, which type are you?

- The Action person wants to get moving. Let's just make a decision and try it out.

- The Meaning person wants to understand – why are we doing this? What is the point here?
- The Structure person wants to know – who’s in charge? What is our timeframe? Where are we in the agenda?
- The Caring person wants to make sure that everyone is ok, and that no one’s feelings are getting hurt.

The four types are posted in the four corners of the room. Craig asked each person to go to the corner that best fits you, take the sign off the wall, and answer the questions on the back as a group.

## ***Lessons Learned***

### Action

- It drives us crazy when meetings drag on and the same discussion is repeated over and over again.
- Meetings could be more efficient.
- We would like people in our group to follow their gut, and be willing to make the hard decision.

### Meaning

- We could all be in the caring corner. If we didn’t care, none of us would be here.
- We are tired of things being forced down our throat without a reason. I want to know WHY a decision is being made. I want to be told why I am wrong. I can’t make decisions without answers.

### Caring

- It drives me crazy when an answer or idea is shut down before we’ve even had a chance to work through it.

### Structure

- It drives us crazy when the group is going down its own road, skipping the structure and not adhering to the agenda.

### General Comments

- It’s a matter of perception. Some may feel that there’s been a clear answer to the “why” question, and others don’t.
- I had everyone pegged!
- I’d like to add one more corner: Particular!
- I was surprised about Bill. I guess he has a clear view from doing research and thinking through this meeting, and that’s why he’s in action.
- Ultimately our challenge is to take bits of all four types in all that we do.

- We each have a propensity toward one, and need to be reminded about the other three.
- Not one of you doesn't have tendency for the other areas.
- Having people in each area makes us a stronger group.
- We are all one big group. We need people in every area to function properly.

## **Interaction Guidelines**

In order to work well together, groups often have a set of interaction guidelines (or ground rules, operating guidelines) that set the stage for how members of the group intend to work together. In order to create a set of interaction guidelines for RSU 24, Craig first asked participants to brainstorm characteristics of high functioning groups. These were posted on the wall and then organized into categories (see Organized Answers below). Craig also shared a list of characteristics that he's collected from group process experts. The group then came to agreement on the set of guidelines listed below. Following the list are the discussion points that led to these conclusions.

## **Conclusions**

### **Transparency and Information**

- Come into meetings and issues open minded
  - No hidden agendas
  - Let your biases known up front
- As much information as possible prior to meetings
- All information that goes to board members should be treated as public, except as otherwise noted
- Educating/planning/advocating in subgroups should be done under the auspices of the board
  - Let the whole group know
- Small informal conversations whose purpose is to gather information are appropriate on any topic outside of the committee and meeting structure
- We represent to the public on behalf of the board ONLY those things which have been formally approved by the board
- Refer public to appropriate staff

### **Professionalism**

- Once a board makes a decision, everybody supports it
  - Not plotting in subgroups to overturn a board decision
  - Okay to give your opinion on a decision, but still support it
- No public, personal criticism
- Agree to disagree

- Separate ideas from personalities
- Treat each other with respect
- Prepared and engaged
- Conflict of Interest
  - We are aware of the law and we disclose conflicts

## **Structure**

- Communications between board and staff
  - Follow the chain of command
    - Board members don't direct employees, okay to ask questions
    - Board members should not establish close relationships on professional issues with management staff
    - Board members let the Superintendent know about:
      - Issues to be addressed
        - That you have seen
        - That you hear about from parents
        - If you have asked staff questions that require effort

## **Organized Answers**

- Quality
  - Want to do the best
  - Engaged
  - Utilize the entire team
- Representation
  - Having the best interest of all you represent
- Fully informed
  - Fully informed
  - Well informed
  - Full knowledge of topic
  - Having good information
- Boundaries
  - Ability to separate fact from emotional context
  - Keep personal items out of the discussion
- Transparency
  - Openness and honesty
  - Don't have any "side groups" with their own agenda!
  - No hidden agendas
- Common Vision
  - Common goals
  - Common vision
  - Set of priorities

- Shared vision
- Leadership
  - Strong leader
  - One leader
- Respect
  - Considerate
    - Care about others in circle
  - Shared respect
  - Respectful
  - Agree we are going to disagree
- Structure
  - Follow rules, bylaws and policies!
  - On person “in charge”
  - Structure
  - Set structure
- Communications
  - Open-minded
  - Good listeners
  - Good communication skills
  - Present position on topic well the first time they say it

## ***Discussion***

- Craig asked participants: Think about any group that you’ve worked with – fishing crew, corporate team, school board, carpentry crew, or any group. When groups are at their best, what are they doing? Write down the three to five things that you think are most important.
- When you come to a meeting and have your mind made up, still have an openness and listen to other’s ideas.
  - A genuine openness that says, I’m willing to be persuaded.
  - Maybe can combine others’ ideas with your own.
- Direct communication
  - In so many groups, conflicts arise from misunderstanding. Probably 90% of the time. Sometimes conflicts arise for other reasons, but most of the time, they are from a lack of understanding.
  - It takes direct communication to avoid misunderstanding.
  - It often takes courage to do this.
- Personal responsibility
  - Might want to add this category up here. Although we have “Fully Engaged” already.
  - It’s so easy to get to finger pointing. But important to talk about how I can be responsible.

- Public Praise – private criticism
  - This is germane to this group. You are in the public spotlight.
  - Maybe you create a ground rule that you don't criticize each other in public settings.
- Clear expectations
  - Setting a structure. Writing down how you are going to function.
- Questions or reactions?
  - Would it be helpful as a group to make a list of characteristics and agree to them? To say that this is how you want to function?
    - Yes.
- List of Operating Guidelines, Interaction Guidelines, Ground Rules, Communication Guidelines. Let's call them "Interaction Guidelines."
  - These will be things you intend to keep in mind on a higher level as you work together.
  - This is the general stuff, not the details.
- Transparency. What does this really mean to you?
  - You must come to the board with an outcome that you'd like.
    - Is it your obligation to say what you'd like at the beginning of the meeting?
      - Well, but being open-minded means you have that outcome in mind, but really come to listen.
  - It's difficult to have an avenue for transparency. We often don't have time for it. We can't be on the phone all day with the Superintendent, and he can't spend all our time dealing with us.
  - Letting your biases known upfront. It's tough because it takes time. Full disclosure takes time.
  - Some board members in the past have already commented on wanting as much information prior to a meeting as possible.
    - I would welcome hearing information in advance prior to the meeting. Try to send it in advance.
  - There is a problem in that being transparent to the group doesn't necessarily mean being transparent to the public.
    - Generally speaking, the board's business is public. However, there are provisions for executive sessions and confidential information.
  - It's important that we maintain professional decorum outside of meetings. We're not getting together in small groups coming to a decision prior to a meeting.
    - We must not develop factions in the board or engage in plotting ahead of time.
  - To me, this is not like a hidden agenda. That's more of an individual's own desire.
  - Springing a plot on everyone at the meeting is not ok.
    - What if you got together and planned something, and then told everyone? What if you didn't spring it on everyone?

- Well, that's a subcommittee.
  - There's a proper way and an improper way to do it. The proper way is to get it on an agenda. Go to the superintendent.
- You want to have all your information before coming to a meeting.
  - But it is good to discuss things with other board members in between meetings.
  - I don't want to cut off communication among board members in between meetings.
  - Having discussions before a meeting – part of it is the spirit of the meeting. What's on the agenda?
- School board members are in a different place than other boards because of law requirements. Their business is public business, or it's handled in executive session where the topic is disclosed.
  - It can't just be that we're meeting at the coffee shop informally to start plotting and planning.
- If you are going to have a committee to study something, that committee could have an executive session if needed.
- If there's a common topic on the agenda, and I run into folks and talk about ideas – that should be ok. It's helpful for getting information.
  - I like to get some opinions before I get to the meeting.
  - Small informal conversations are appropriate outside of the meeting structure.
- It's a fine line between small conversations to help inform to laying the cards out at a formal meeting to make a decision.
- If discussions happen in the background leading up to a decision, and then there is just a vote with no discussion at the meeting, then that's a problem. The public needs to know what the discussion was that led to a decision. It never works out well. That's not transparent.
- Bumping into folks at the grocery store and chatting about topics is fine.
- This gets into communications.
  - When you get that question from a reporter, what do you do? Who speaks for the board?
    - Ideally the chair does. But in these small towns, this happens 6 times a day.
    - This has to be done with a certain amount of professionalism and decorum.
  - So what are your rules about this?
    - One idea is that you can talk about things that have happened in the past, where decisions have already been made.
    - It is not ok to talk about topics upcoming.
  - The website is available to serve as a central information clearinghouse for the public. The public can find all the information leading up to a vote at the website.
  - There is a fine line between board business and parent business.

- I get tons of calls from parents.
    - I always ask the parents talk to the teacher or the principle first, then the superintendent if needed.
      - Refer public to the appropriate staff.
  - Board members are not responsible for answering detailed information about the operations of the school.
- Professionalism
  - Let's move the bit about not plotting ideas outside of the board meetings under this topic.
  - No public personal criticism.
    - Of course, it is ok to criticize an idea, or even a behavior. But it is not ok to criticize a person.
  - Treat each other with respect.
  - Once the board makes a decision, everyone should support it.
    - When the board makes a vote, yes, you have to support it. But, when a constituent comes up to me, I can say that this is what the board decided, and that was the vote, but that I didn't particularly agree with it. I argued for the different decision.
      - I agree with that, and that's why we put minutes out. This shows who opposed and supported a vote. The public can see what each board member said.
  - Coming to the board meeting prepared and ready to be engaged.
- Items about boundaries here.
  - Keep personal items out of the discussion.
  - Separate fact from emotional content.
  - Relationship between staff and the board, in terms of communications. If you have a question about a school, do you go to the superintendent, or the principal?
    - You follow the chain of command. You start with the superintendent.
    - Otherwise the principals feel like you are micromanaging. That's their jobs.
      - I agree. However, if one of these people is a parent, then sure, you can go to the principal.
    - An inquiry might be appropriate to gather information at that level.
      - However we could end up sucking the life out of the superintendent with all our questions.
    - If you establish an unprofessional relationship with a principal, that principal might circumvent the chain of command.
      - He or she might feel as though they've got that board member in his or her corner now.
  - In the local advisory boards, we put ourselves in a corner.

- I want to know that my staff are working on an issue. But I would appreciate knowing what areas you are working on.
- Board members are the eyes of your communities. If something is awry in your community, go ahead and report it as a community member.
  - Be sure you know what hat you are wearing and are clear about it.
  - I'm here as a parent! Be clear.
- Sometimes this is very hard.
- Often it doesn't matter if you are clear about what hat you're wearing. I'm seen as a board member no matter what. I've been asked to not go on field trips with my kids just because of the hat I wear.
  - It doesn't matter what you do, or how clear you are.
  - Hard because a lot of people are your friends.
  - Keep things general when socializing with other people.
- Because we wear various hats, are chairs of the local advisory committees, we do get involved in those committees.
  - But we're also providing open communication back.
  - Lot of times, when I hear something, a new issue, I make sure that person goes through the chain of command. I ask the person: did you call the teacher, the principal, then call the superintendent? But I will also call the superintendent myself just to say, here's a heads up, this is coming your way.
- We have to recognize that even at that public level, we are wearing a very different hat.
- What is considered a conflict of interest, and how flexible is that? As a parent and a board member, where do we fit that in? For example, volunteering at school.
  - I was never allowed to volunteer.
  - You can't participate in anything that technically could be a paid position. That is seen as filling a role that someone could be getting money to fill.
  - People are nervous about having a school board member in the building.
  - State law says that you can't accept a paid position.
    - In one case, however, we had a school with no coach. So the board member got an assistant who got paid for the position, and then volunteered to be the coach. There was no one else who could do it, and he didn't take any money for it.

- When I did volunteer, I knew my own boundaries. But, I found that I ended up hearing things that I'd rather not hear, and stopped doing it.
  - I don't want the board to lose faith in me.
  - What leniency does the board have within state law?
  - You have to be a parent first.
  - It's not so much about the money, as it is about who you would be in control over in that position.
  - Each district handles this differently.
  - If a school can't find a coach, and a board member offers, then it's fine, as long as they don't accept any remuneration.
- I have a thought about a new name for the board.
  - RSU is made up of several communities. People don't know what the RSU is and you have to rattle off whole lists of towns. We need to assemble the position of being a group, and our name is not helping that.
  - It's fine with me if you come up with a name because I don't care what it is.
  - I think it can be an official name.
  - I'd like the name to have a meaning.
    - The group is open to an informal name. Think about it during the break.

## Meeting Protocols and Procedures

After carefully talking through each item, the group arrived at several conclusions regarding meeting protocols and procedures, which are included below. In advance of the meeting, Bill Webster provided recommendations for the group to work off of. Following the conclusions are the complete discussion points that led to these conclusions.

### Conclusions

Area	Conclusions: Protocols and Procedures
1. Agenda setting	Board members should forward an agenda idea to the superintendent, who will discuss the idea with the board chair. The board member will be alerted if an item is not placed on the written agenda and the reason why. The board member will be encouraged to discuss the item with the chair and superintendent. If the board member still believes that an item should be placed on the agenda, the member may bring the item up during the "adjustments to the agenda" section of the meeting. The board chair would either agree to the addition, or after a proper motion the board would vote on whether or not to add the item to the agenda.

2. Decisions in meetings	Normally the board will try not to decide issues not previously posted on the agenda. However, the board always reserves the right to decide issues on the spot and it may be especially appropriate when there is a prior established policy directive.
3. Time Limits	For now, plan on 3 hours per meeting. Our intention is to go to 2-hour meetings. Any meeting may be extended at anytime as per agreement of the group.
4. Agenda format	See below
5. Staff reports to Board	See agenda format and Attachment A-II (included in advance retreat materials) for possible format of monthly 6-page report on our 12 schools. Suggest keeping reports brief but creativity (pictures) is encouraged.
6. How do we address each other? Might it change depending on the type of meeting?	First names contribute to a collaborative atmosphere and should generally be used to address fellow board members, superintendent, invited guests and staff. Mr./Mrs./Ms. is appropriate for expulsion hearings and for members of the public that ask to address the board.
7. Shape of seating	The seating should be arranged to allow the chair and superintendent to view more easily each board member.
8. Where do/should people sit?	Board seating should ideally vary from meeting to meeting and ensure that all representatives from one municipality or one school not sit together.
9. Distribution of agenda – via mail or email with hard copy at meeting?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• E-mail agenda and supporting material in advance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Except that confidential materials are not to be included in e-mail – to be sent hardcopy instead</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Hardcopy agenda at meeting</li> <li>• Hardcopy packets at the meeting at the member’s advance request</li> <li>• Minutes need not include supporting documents but should refer to them by name</li> </ul>
10. Public comment procedure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the course of its business, the board chair may call on members of the public as appropriate.</li> <li>• If a member of the public has a concern, the concern should be taken to the board only as a last resort and then, should be taken to the board chair in advance of a meeting. Public concerns are more appropriately addressed through other channels.</li> <li>• The chair will put time restrictions on public comments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make sure the public is informed about how it works.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
11. Use of Intra-board email	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Everything that one member writes to another school board member or school district, or in which the district is referred, is subject to state freedom of access law.</li> <li>• <b>Sharing information</b> by e-mail and phone is</li> </ul>

	<p>appropriate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Discussing issues or trying to persuade each other</b> by e-mail or phone is not appropriate and should be done at board and committee meetings.</li> </ul>
12. Who speaks for the Board?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board members are authorized to represent to the public board decisions that have been made. Otherwise, the Board Chair and Superintendent are authorized to speak for the full Board.</li> <li>• Board members are always free to speak as individuals but are asked to keep an open mind on issues scheduled to come before the Board.</li> </ul>

Agenda Format

- A. Call to Order
- B. Presentation by Hosting School
- C. Adjustments to the Agenda
- D. Approval of Minutes
- E. Report from the Superintendent
- F. Report from the Chair
- G. Meeting Business
  - 1. Business Item #1
  - 2. Business Item #2
  - 3. Etc.
- H. Review of Written Staff Reports – Assistant Superintendent, Business Manager and Schools
- I. Reports from and Charges to Board Committees or associated committees
- J. Next Meeting and Possible Agenda Items
- K. Board Member Comments/Meeting Review
- L. Adjournment

## ***Discussion***

- The Chair and the Superintendent don't want to be presumptuous about this. How we operate together should be a board decision.
- Bill prepared a one-page overview with possible board meeting protocols and procedures.
- Agenda Setting
  - If I was the chair, and I had already said no, then you blindsided me by bringing it up again during adjustments to the agenda, then I'm still going to say no. I'm not going to change my mind.
  - If it's brought up as a motion, is this a decision for the board as a whole to decide?
    - The first step is to take it to superintendent who discusses with the board chair.
    - Next, the chair could say yes, or no.
    - If the chair said no, then the member would call for motion, and would have to get majority vote of the board to get the item on the agenda.
      - This is recourse for the rest of the board, a stopgap for the board to say "yes, we want to talk about this issue."
  - Wait until the end of the meeting and then put it on the list of agenda items for next meeting.
  - If it's something the member is passionate about, the chair is likely to take it.
    - Legally, the board owns the agenda and ultimately has the power to say yes or no.
  - There might be a reason that we don't want an item on the agenda right now. So, come in and have a meeting with us to discuss it. Timing is important. We may feel that the item will be more appropriate at a future date.
  - I don't know if it would always be appropriate to take action on that agenda item that night. Ethically, we shouldn't take action if it's not been on the table publicly ahead of time.
    - Typically it's an adjustment to agenda and we vote on those.
    - Well, we have to be careful when acting on something that has not been out in the public yet.
  - Maybe the board votes to put it on the agenda for the next meeting.
    - However, if it's an emergency, there are times that we have to vote on an issue.
    - But general rule is that it should be out on the published agenda before the board takes action.
    - Be sure that when the motion comes to the floor to make an adjustment to the agenda, we want to be sure that it could be for

that meeting's agenda, or a future meeting. Sometimes it's important to address an issue immediately.

- Agenda Format
  - I don't like having public comments on there before meeting business. I would expect comments from the public as we get through the business items.
  - I'm concerned that public will stand up and talk about things that aren't on the agenda. It's easy for the public to come up and talk about any kind of issue, with no notification.
  - This puts the chair in a tough spot. The onus is on the chair to control it. Then if there's a rant, then it makes it look like the chair is cutting someone off.
  - We voted earlier to only have public comment on items that were on the agenda.
    - That was a Union 96 agreement.
    - No, think it was an RSU agreement.
    - This will need to be clarified.
  - We have a time limit for public comments, per subject.
    - In the past, the chair could always call on someone from the public.
  - We don't want to hear same thing from 10 people. But if a person is there with information that would be helpful, then we want to be able to call on that person.
  - My concern about allowing a public comment on an item that isn't on the agenda is that I want to know the public's concern ahead of time, and be able to respond to it.
    - I want that person in my office, not before the board.
      - This comes back to the chain of command.
  - Policy that we don't take any action or comment on any item that isn't on the agenda. And there is a time limit for each comment.
  - We need to hear everything. But if we as a board know that there is going to be an issue, and there are going to be 20 people there, then we could say that one person can speak for the group, with a time limit.
  - Set time limits on the whole period of public comment.
  - I agree with not wanting to have comments in advance of the meeting business. I also agree with taking comments but not doing anything about them during the meeting.
  - Make it clear that if you have a concern, you take it to the superintendent's office.
  - The problem is that if someone comes in with a complaint that the superintendent hasn't been made aware of, then what's the board to do? If we don't know about it ahead of time, then we can't act on.
  - As a board, we are here to set policy, hire administrators, and deal with functional areas of the RSU. The public has forgotten our role.

- I'm hearing a good argument for not accepting public comment at meetings except for items on the agenda.
  - But another way is to be democratic, and to hear all the concerns of the people.
    - But this is actually a republic. The people elected officials to represent and make decisions for them.
- There is a mechanism for getting a concern onto the agenda. You take concerns to the superintendent. This is not a forum for every person to come and complain.
  - We should not be feeding this misconception among the public.
    - 8 people agreed with this.
  - Other opinions:
    - I've had people call me and say, "we went through the proper channels and our concern is still not addressed."
    - I want to give citizens a chance to speak here. It ought to be open.
      - Might be addressed by the LAC's – Local Advisory Committees.
      - Board meetings are open to the public but are not public meetings.
      - I say give the chair flexibility to call on people as we go.
- I'm concerned about the LAC's. We don't have a feel for them yet. We can't have people criticizing by name.
  - Is it going to be as formal as a regular board meeting? There are so many people out there who will not talk to the proper people. You might say, well, that's their problem, but in actuality, it's their kids who are suffering for it, so we can't ignore it.
  - There are things that never ever get resolved because for some reason some people will not go through the right channels. Or they wait until their kids are out of school to before bringing it to the superintendent.
- It's great to put the LAC in, but we're not required to do it. Same chain of command goes for the LAC.
- You could agree that generally, the public only comments on agenda items, when board is discussing it, and then leave the board chair a little discretion to welcome other comments.
- We could allow comments on things that aren't on the agenda, but let the comments come with no details. They can only say the general topic, we note it, and then that's it.
  - Then we would notify the person with the comment on how to go through the proper channels to deal with the issue.
- What if we put an opportunity for public to comment at the end of the meeting? Make them wait through the whole meeting.
- If we are going to do this, how do we let the public know how this works?

- We could include a sentence on agenda that says the public can comment on agenda items, with a time limit.
- Only problem is that the board chair may call on public member, and people might carry on. Put in a hard time limit. We have to be efficient with our business.
  - The chair WILL put time restrictions, rather than MIGHT.
  - If we set a time limit, then the public knows that they are only going to have 1 minute, or whatever it is.
- Bill explained his ideas behind the proposed agenda structure:
  - Presentation by hosting school because we want to learn about each of the locations.
  - I only want to give very short presentation because I communicate with you other ways through weekly reports, etc.
  - We want to get to meeting business as quickly as possible.
- In the adjustment of agenda, can we change the order of things?
  - Yes
- Under Reports from and Charges to Board Committees, we may want to add reports from committees that aren't board committees that people might be sitting on.
- How long is the meeting?
  - Too long!
  - I think we need a time limit.
  - We've discussed this and think we need time limits. Concern is that right now as we are just getting started, and there's so much to do and we need the time. Maybe once we have our feet under us a little bit, we can set a time limit.
  - We could set time limit now, but give the board the opportunity to extend as needed.
  - We could go all night, but people lose interest after 2 or 3 hours. We could end up making bad decisions.
  - We could set it up so anything we vote on is at the beginning. Then we're not making big decisions as evening wears on. And if someone really needed to leave, they wouldn't miss the votes.
    - The problem is that we have to have a motion to adjourn. Need a quorum. People can't leave early.
    - The chair could say, " we're approaching our 3-hour time limit, but we have all these things to deal with. Can we make a motion to extend?"
  - I think three hours is too many. More like two.
  - We meet every other, or every week right now.
  - We're trying to do one year's worth of work in 3 months. This is tough initially, but once we're up and running, two hours should be plenty. And with functioning committees, issues will go to committee and not take up a lot of board meeting time.



- My preference is for board members to call me Bill in order to foster a sense of collaboration.
  - Except in an expulsion hearing.
- First names show that we are more human, and are more able to talk with each other.
  - It's not out of disrespect; it's to demonstrate a collaborative nature.
- Shape of seating
  - We need to sit so we can all see each other.
  - The square is not good because we can't see each other.
  - We need a U, a real U with no corners.
  - What about the public and guests, too? And Staff?
    - Only the superintendent and the board members sit in the U.
  - It's hard with these tables to set up a U.
    - How about having a head table with Bill and Mike, and then the tables go off on an angle so we can see everyone.
    - During our meetings, the superintendent and the chair sit separately so that they don't pass things back and forth and have side conversations.
      - I like sitting next to Mike and we're pretty good about this, about not having side conversations, but once in awhile we need to check in with each other. I want to continue to be able to do that.
- Seating arrangements
  - People should be mixed up and not sit as a block from your own schools.
  - Folks have name tags individually, and we should continue with that.
  - Members can sit where they want to sit. No assigned seating.
- Distribution of materials
  - Right now everything is hard copy.
  - An alternative is using email.
    - If we're doing paperless meetings, then send out one by email.
      - Right now, I get the email, and then get to the meeting and the hardcopy there is different from what I printed out from my email. There should only be one version.
    - The public agenda should be one page, max two pages.
      - I'm happy to get it by email. It's redundant to have things twice.
  - Sometimes there are changes between the time the agenda goes out and the meeting.
    - It might make sense to have the email version, then a hard copy with the revisions in it at the meeting.
  - We get the agenda with the weighted votes, then the next meeting we get the same thing in the minutes. Do we have to have the weighted votes in the agenda since we get them in the meeting minutes anyway?

- We call it the working agenda so board members can keep a running tally for themselves.
    - I'd like the agendas to be one to two pages and take the weighted votes out. They will be in the meeting minutes anyway.
  - I don't mind getting it by email, but I can't download and print.
    - What if you email everything, and then get full hard copy at the meeting?
      - In advance electronically.
      - I only want a hardcopy at the meeting if there've been changes.
    - I need a hardcopy of the agenda at the meeting to work off of.
      - This includes the supporting materials, reports from schools, etc.
      - I rely on email for this.
        - Confidential information will not be sent via email, ever.
  - How about: Email everything that you can legally email. Then provide a hard copy of the agenda at the meeting.
    - Then individuals can contact the office if they want hard copies of anything else.
  - Email everything we can.
    - Mail confidential information.
    - Two page agenda hard copy at the meeting.
    - You'll have it Thursday for meeting on Tuesday.
  - Meeting minutes
    - Do those include supporting materials?
      - Yes. Do they need to be part of minutes?
        - No.
    - Minutes can refer to supporting documents, but not include them.
      - Instead, include a sentence at the bottom that all materials are available at superintendent's office.
- Intra-board email
  - Everything is subject to Freedom of Access. Even if you email a friend and mention something about the board, it's subject to FOA.
    - State law (FOA) not federal law (FOIA)
  - We all need to be aware of this.
  - There needs to be a distinction between sharing information and engaging in a debate.
    - Here's a draft law that was just drafted. Sharing that is fine.
    - But discussing this over email or on the phone is not ok. That is something that should only happen in the public meeting.
      - This all goes back to transparency.
  - Need clear distinction between gathering information and putting forth your opinion.

- If a board member forwarded a chain of discussion to a parent or teacher, it could end up at the Ellsworth American.
  - Phone calls and other one-on-one conversations are tricky because we live in small communities and see people all the time.
    - We need to treat phone calls and email the same way.
  - What about going to expulsion hearing, and you've ended up with information that you didn't seek, but shouldn't have gotten?
    - You may have to recuse yourself.
- Who speaks for the board?
  - Any of you can speak for the board on any matter that has been decided.
  - On any topic with no official position, you can't speak to it.

## Picture Challenge

As a communications challenge, Craig gave each person a picture. The objective was for the group to put the pictures in order. The only rules were:

1. Do not show your picture to anyone else
2. Do not look at anyone else's picture

The idea was to use this fun exercise to learn more about how we communicate with each other. Following the exercise, Craig asked for comments on what participants learned from the challenge.

## Lessons Learned

- We were resourceful. We didn't need top down management.
- There was some group process.
- We had to be creative.
- We had look for commonalities.
- Some people took a facilitative role.
- It was necessary to hear from everyone.
- It would have gone smoother if everyone had listened to everyone else.
- I didn't point out the key feature in my picture. Without that information, there was no way figure it out. We left out the small pieces, and these were the most important.

- We should have asked you more questions in the beginning. Was it one continuous picture?
  - Craig: But I would not have answered!
- Some of you tried out different organizing principles.
- I went into it thinking that it would be a whole picture. Then realized it was different. Once we realized it though, we did shift quickly. We didn't stick to our preconceived notions.
- It's like subcommittees working together to get the big picture.
- We overlook small details that could be significant.
- If we don't all have the complete information, we can't make educated decisions.

## Committee Organization and Membership

The group came to conclusions regarding which committees are needed, what the committees should be charged with, and who should serve on each committee. These are found in the chart below. Following the conclusion are the complete discussion points.

### Conclusions

<b>Group A</b>	<b>Key Staff</b>	<b>Membership</b>	<b>Some Possible Charges</b>
Finance/Budget	David Bridgham, Patti Riggs	Jenna Shorey Rich Malaby Alice Dow Randy Bragg Jon Moren	Develop draft budget Budget approval process Review insurance bids Review bank bids Propose warrant procedures Develop financial reports
Personnel/ Negotiations	Janet Jordan	Jeff Alley Julie Curtis Annie Perry Dick Gray	Establish administrator scale Establish contract forms Hancock teacher negotiations Time clock recommendation Employee benefit plans Payroll system issues Mandated appointments
Policy	Katrina Kane	Lee Guildford Mike Pinkham Janet Wilpan Geoff Zentz	Required policies Intra-district enrollment policy Handling of issues with no RSU policy

		Jamie Buteau	
<b>Group B</b>			
Facilities and Transportation	David Bridgham, Russ Gray	Mike Pinkham Jamie Buteau Lee Guildford Mike Pinkham Geoff Zentz Dick Gray	Facilities review Summer work priorities Maintenance-related contracts Transportation vision Transportation routing
Dropout/Wellness	Amy Boles, Ann Slayton, Kelly, Jenny Gott	Julie Curtis Bragg Jon Moren	Status of drop-out work to-date Wellness program integration Name non-board committees?
Educational Programming	Katrina Kane, Susan Smith, Ann McCann	Jenna Shorey Annie Perry Janet Wilpan Richard Malaby Jeff Alley Alice Dow	HCTC Alternative Education Adult Education

## ***Discussion***

- When planning this meeting, Craig, Bill and Mike tried to strike a balance between bringing forth ideas and letting you as a board decide.
  - Bill put forward some ideas in the advance retreat materials, including suggested committees and tasks for each.
  - Also included in the materials is information on how other districts organize their committees.
  - Craig explained that he was going to ask the group to brainstorm the work that committees need to do, but decided not to. This does not mean, however, that committee charges cannot be changed or added to.
- Bill offered a brief overview of the advance materials.
  - There is no right way to do this.
  - The number of committees bears no relationship to the size of the district.
    - Portland has three standing, and assign ad hoc as needed.
  - You could have a non-board committee handle certain things.
  - Consistently in other districts, however, you see one for finance, one for policy, and one for personnel.
  - Those who have worked with committees recommend having fewer rather than more, at least from a superintendent perspective.
    - This results in better attendance and better focus.
  - You can always change the number down the road.
  - Today we will determine the number of people and which committees. Then at our board meeting on Tuesday, we can make a final decision.

- We are trying to bring people together from dispersed areas. One way to do this, and to avoid people making long drives two nights in a row is for the first Tuesday of the month be for committee meetings.
  - This coming Tuesday is first, but we're having a board meeting because we have to set these things up.
  - Then we could go into three separate meetings that would meet concurrently.
  - Each person would be on one Group A committee and one Group B committee.
  - We would start by convening only Group A committees on the first Tuesday for the next few months. Then we would move into Group B and come up with a system.
- As superintendent, I see myself rotating among the committees.
- Committees could meet more often if needed, but would at least have the first Tuesday per month meeting set.
- We have a tight timeline, and a lot to accomplish:
  - Insurance bids – May 12
  - Adopt budget – May 19
  - Budget hearings – May 26
  - Public vote on budget – June 11
- This seems rational.
- Are we ready to establish committees and let them start working on these issues?
  - We have to. Let's get going.
  - It would be simple to agree that these committees are going to do these things, as proposed by Bill, and then we can decide who's on the committees today.
    - Yes, this is what the group wants to do.
- At the next board meeting on April 7<sup>th</sup>, the board can take action to formally establish the committees and appoint members.
- Committee meetings are the first Tuesday of the month, but if we are serving on two different committees, how does that work?
  - Each person will only serve in one committee in Group A.
  - Then three months from now we'll start a Group B sequence so there would be no conflict.
- I think it is important for continuity on this board to have the make up of these committees include a system for rotation among committees.
  - We don't want to have same person on finance for 12 years, who then leaves, leaving behind a big gap that no one else knows how to fill, and who was also taking up a slot that other people could have filled.
- In Ellsworth, members are appointed by the board chair.
  - I think that makes a lot of sense. But I'm concerned that you don't get different points of view that way.
  - It's a benefit to board members and to the board in general for members to serve on various committees.

- For now, it seems to make sense to utilize people according to their strengths.
  - Or we could just pull out of a hat and put people wherever.
    - Eventually we could do that. Right now, we have a lot of work to accomplish quickly.
- I don't mind rotating people through, but if people want to stay on a committee, I think they should be able to.
- Does a warrant need a majority?
  - The board is going to have to develop a policy around this.
  - With all of us in different towns, it's hard to just go in and sign a warrant. It's easy if it's in your own town, but that won't always be the case now.
- I have to recommend that the chair of the finance committee sign the warrant.
  - If they are out of town, put a provision in place for someone else to do it.
- Craig suggested that since you have so much work to do now, let's get people onto the committees.
  - The, who ends up on the committees will be up to board chair.
  - But let's start with strengths and get some names on the committees.
- Once the committees are established on Tuesday, you decide who's going to call the first meeting. Then you run through your first committee meeting agenda, which is included in the public agenda (provided with advance materials).
- Facilities and transportation is going to be a very important committee
  - We have buildings with no long-term maintenance plans.
  - We have no vision for transportation.
    - It doesn't need attention right now, but it's likely to in the near future.
- Dropout and Wellness
  - Some districts don't have separate committees. Board representatives.
  - What is the future of HCTC?
- Maybe we should rework the distribution of numbers on these committees. Maybe we need more on transportation and facilities, for example.
  - Our dropout committee includes teachers, counselors, kids, and others. We just have a board presence on the committee. It's much more than just us.
  - Important, but not as important as transportation, for example, because we aren't the ones helping the kids. We have a presence, and make suggestions to the dropout committee, but it's the teachers and counselors who really work with the kids.
  - One option is for dropout and wellness to get established as a special committee, and then it can change to something else later.
- Option to have three committees for now in Group B:
  - Facilities
  - Transportation
  - Advisory Committee to look at all the loose ends, including dropout.
- Educational programming
  - There is a process that needs to be going back to forth, and more than just a reporting process to the board.

- In the case of all these committees, they have to lead to a policy because the board is a policy-making entity.
- One option is to keep dropout and wellness as an advisory/ad hoc committee.
  - Keep educational programming.
  - Keep facilities and transportation.
- I feel like dropout should be a subcommittee of personnel.
- The board chair is going to make final decisions on Tuesday night.
- Regarding the issue of posting board minutes, they come out as a draft and then are approved at the next meeting. How public are the minutes until they are officially approved?
  - We could either post them on the website as soon as they are ready in draft form, or we could wait until board approves them.
    - Let's post and circulate the draft as long as it is clearly marked as draft and says, "subject to approval by board at the next meeting."

## **Committee Operations**

The group continued discussing how the committees plan to operate. Conclusions are listed first, followed by the discussion points that led to these conclusions.

### ***Conclusions***

- All Committee meetings open to the public unless otherwise stated
- For starters, all Committee members are made up of school board members
  - Input solicited from non-board members (even invited to a meeting or two) as appropriate
- Staff responsibilities
  - Prepare materials and correspondence
  - Help the Committee chair establish the agenda
  - Committee minutes
  - Attend
- Committee chair
  - Run the meeting
  - Set the agenda consistent with board mandate and staff needs
- Committee work plan
  - Committee deals with things mandated by the board
  - Can take up topics on its own under the broad charge of the board
- Committee reporting
  - Committee minutes and agendas posted on the website
  - Committee oral reports at each board meeting
- Recommendations for board decisions
  - Taken up in the business part of the meeting

- Briefing materials provided in advance
    - Proposed text
    - Rationale
- Voting in Committee by people, not by weight
- Chair is ex officio of each Committee
- Any board member may attend any Committee

## ***Discussion***

- Dropout – there are other citizens who could be involved.
  - These are all open public meetings.
- But let's walk before we run, and have board and staff at first.
- Regarding non-school board members on the committees:
  - Not in Group A yet
  - In regards to a particular policy, it can be really helpful to solicit the input of non-board members who have particular experience. For example, when we did a chemical policy we invited a lot of non-board members to participate in order to help us out.
  - Solicit input and use skills and knowledge of whomever you need to help develop policies, but they don't need to serve on the meeting.
    - They could attend the meetings.
    - They don't need to be a committee member.
  - Policy
    - Initial policies need to be board driven, especially ones regarding how the board is going to operate.
- Negotiations committee meetings
  - These have to be run in executive session when discussing negotiations.
- Bill will be an ex officio member of each committee.
- Staff people will:
  - Do minutes
  - Work with chair and committee to establish agenda
  - Prepare material for the board
  - Handle correspondence
  - At least one on each committee
- Committee Chair responsibilities:
  - Run the meeting
  - Set the agenda with advice from the superintendent, and staff person
    - Should mirror mandate and charge
  - Set agenda consistent with board meetings
- Committees should only work on things they've been mandated to work on by the board.
  - Committees don't vote anyway.

- Committees should have broad charges, so that so as long as you are within the broad charge, it makes sense to work on it.
    - Committees may have specific mandates, too.
  - Big things will still need to come to the board, like getting bids, etc.
- Agendas and minutes of committee minutes don't need to be circulated to everyone because that's why we have committees.
  - Do we need an oral report of committee meetings at every board meeting?
    - Only if it's required.
    - If a committee has something that needs board action, it gets sent out ahead of time and goes to the board meeting agenda.
- Will minutes of committee meetings be posted on the website, in case you wanted to know what happened in another committee?
  - Yes. Also the agendas.
  - Some of the committees relate to each other, and there might be an issue with a lot of crossover among committees.
- If a committee has a recommendation, what should the other board members' role be in taking action on that recommendation? How much information do they need?
  - If conversation about a committee's recommendation lasts for more than a certain amount of time, then a committee would have to go back and answer the questions of the board members.
  - We will have the information prior to the board meeting, and a written report ahead of time.
  - If a committee sends something up, then minutes should be sent out with the packet ahead of time.
  - It would be more helpful to have a consolidated report that is part of the packet, rather than just the minutes.
  - Include all the information on the website, including a synthesis of the topic and recommendation.
    - So are you asking the staff person to prepare minutes, but also a synthesis report of the proposal, and backup information?
      - Yes, but the synthesis only needs to include the proposed text and the rationale
- In educational programming, for example, you have a majority. But committees are only advisory.
- Chair would also be an ex officio member of committees.
  - All committees are open, and board members are free to meet with other committees, especially if there is a topic of interest.

## **Committee Mandates**

Craig proposed mandates for the Group A committees. After making a few changes, the group agreed to the following language.

## ***Conclusions***

The **Finance Committee** develops financial procedures and the annual budget for board consideration, and reviews financial operations on behalf of the board.

The **Personnel/Negotiations Committee** develops personnel contracts and procedures for board consideration, participates in negotiations and on behalf of the board, and facilitates the filling of mandated positions.

The **Policy Committee** develops policies and procedures for board consideration not otherwise handled by another committee.

## ***Discussion***

- Proposed mandates provide a way to check that we are on board.
- Finance committee develops procedures and has an oversight function.
- Why do we have a policy committee if personnel does contracts?
  - We will develop contract forms.
  - Policy committee will handle personnel policies.
    - Develop for procedures
    - Oversight function
- The policy committee might be allowed to sign off on policies, if the board approves a policy to do that.

## **Closing Comments**

Each participant was invited to make a brief closing comment, a reflection about the meeting or a lingering concern going forward.

- Good start. We made a lot of headway and accomplished a lot. Thank you for your time.
- Ditto. It was interesting. It was ok.
- I think it was a well-put together workshop. I think it was positive. Good progress. Shows how much work we have to do.
- Turned out better than I expected. I think it was worth it.

- We were able to get a lot of work done, the little details. Getting the mechanics of how we're going to work is hard. Mostly glad Janet put her glasses on!
- Good experience. Tuesday will be refreshing.
- Good facilitated discussion. Good start for Tuesday
- I liked the day, which surprised me. I wasn't prepared to. Did well on the process. I am goal and action oriented. Still concerned about where we are going as an organization, where we headed. Concerns about the direction of our organization.
- Whole thing is going to be overwhelming. Took care of a lot of details helping us go forward. Liked the four corners. Makes you think about how you think about everyone else, which is helpful;
- Also liked four corners. We have a long way to go to figure out our direction of our organization;
- Got a lot of things started today and thank all the people in the action corner keeping our meeting moving right along.
- Appreciative of all of you that participated so well and so openly. Helps me in my roles knowing each of you and where you're coming from. It's daunting to think about all the work we haven't even touched yet. But then I remember that our first board meeting was March 3<sup>rd</sup>, and look how far we've come since then.
- When we planned the meeting, one of my concerns as chair of a board that hasn't worked together before was our ability to work together as an RSU. We've made great strides, but today hopefully brought us together as one unified board. Appreciate that, too.