

FAIRBANKS NORTH STAR BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF EDUCATION
FAIRBANKS, ALASKA

Work Session

MINUTES

April 18, 2016

Vice President Lisa Gentry called the work session to order at 6:42 p.m. in the board room of the FNSBSD Administrative Center at 520 Fifth Avenue. The work session was called for consideration of Policy 260: Meetings, and Policy 264: Types of Meetings, with respect to school board meeting structure and options.

Mrs. Gentry read the district's mission statement: *"Our mission is to provide an excellent, equitable education in a safe, supportive environment so all students will succeed and contribute to a diverse and changing society."*

Present:

Lisa Gentry, Vice President
Allyson Lambert, Treasurer
Michael O'Brien, Clerk
Wendy Dominique, Member
Sue Hull, Member

Absent:

Heidi Haas, President
Sean Rice, Member

Staff Present:

Dr. Karen Gaborik, Superintendent of Schools
Sharice Walker, Director of Public Relations
Sharon Tuttle, Executive Assistant to the Board

Policy 260: Meetings & Policy 264: Types of Meetings [0:00:49]

Vice President Gentry provided a brief overview of the board's work to-date on Policy 260: Meetings, and Policy 264: Types of Meetings. Since October 2015, the school board had been reviewing the structures and efficiencies of their special meetings, work sessions, and regular meetings. They had also been considering various options to streamline meetings to allow board members the opportunity for more in depth conversations without adding additional meetings or limiting the public process.

In October 2015, the board held a work session with legal counsel regarding its meetings. Board members received a refresher on the Alaska Open Meeting Act, along with an overview of district meeting policies, guidelines, and processes as they aligned to Alaska state statutes. From the work session, new language was proposed to be added to the meeting policies noting the board could, to the extent the law allowed, move into executive session at any properly noticed meeting. Additionally, it was originally proposed that language allowing for formal action at regular and special meetings only be eliminated, as it was noted, the board often provided direction to the administration at work sessions, which could be considered as action.

At the December 1, 2015 Regular Meeting, the board, based on the October 2015 work session discussions, considered revisions to Policy 260: Meetings, and Policy 264: Types of Meetings. After considerable discussion and debate during first reading, the board made amendments reinstating language limiting formal action to regular and special meetings; they also amended the work session language before moving the policies to second reading. At the January 2016 Regular Meeting, the board, desiring more clarity on the options, postponed action on the policies until after they could consider the policies further at a work session. The policies were now before the board for further review during the current work session.

Policy 260: Meetings & Policy 264: Types of Meetings (continued)

Board discussion ensued. Item for information only; no action required. Board members, along with Superintendent Dr. Gaborik, and John Sedor, legal counsel, reviewed the policies' proposed language as presented and postponed at second reading. Much of the discussion during the work session centered on what constituted action within the guidelines of Roberts Rules of Order and the Open Meetings Act (OMA). The board had self-imposed the restriction of no formal action at work sessions through its own policies. Board members felt the Fairbanks community was accustomed to the idea the board did not, and would not, take formal action at work sessions.

Other topics of discussion included the significance of building and growing board member relationships; the importance of the public process and not limiting public access and input; the frequency of board meetings and not calling a meeting, just to have a meeting; working on meeting efficiencies to keep the length of meetings within specified meeting times; cancelling meetings when needed but seeking more board input in the decision; the opportunity work sessions afforded for more informal and in-depth conversations and discussions on specific topics; consideration of risks and remedies for policy and OMA violations; and the president's role in clarifying the direction of the board to the superintendent.

Board members and the administration liked the recent practice of bringing a work session consensus item, as warranted, forward for public review and a formal vote at a regular or special meeting and recommended the practice be continued. The board appreciated the opportunity to discuss items informally at work sessions and did not want it construed significant decisions were being made out of the normal public process. Bringing consensus items forward for formal action at a regular or special meeting would allow for public input and record the board's formal vote. This would help to clarify the board's direction to the administration and the public on certain items. It would also clarify the board's official position, as consensus was not always unanimous or clear at work sessions.

There was agreement among board members regarding the amendment at first reading reinstating language to Policy 260 restricting formal action to regular and special meetings only. Board members supported the policy coming back before the board for second reading as amended and approved during first reading.

Mrs. Dominique left the meeting at 7:29 p.m.

The board suggested reverting Policy 264: Types of Meetings, section A – Regular Meetings, back to its original language. Board members agreed no formal votes should be taken at work sessions, but noted it would serve the board well to be able to provide direction to the administration. After consideration of term interpretations, and what constituted consensus, formal action, and providing direction, and to better reflect the board's intent and practice, board members suggested language for section C – Work Sessions be revised:

- 1st sentence (lines 23-25): revert to original language
- 2nd sentence (lines 25-27): revise to read, "A work session is an opportunity to study and review materials in depth, allow for public input, and provide direction to the administration."
- 3rd sentence (lines 27-28): delete entire sentence
- 4th sentence (lines 30-31): delete entire sentence

The policies would come before the board for second reading at its May 3, 2016 Regular Meeting.

Board Comments/Announcements [0:56:07]

None.

The meeting adjourned at 7:38 p.m.

Submitted by Sharon Tuttle, executive assistant to the Board of Education.