

**EAST STROUDSBURG AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF EDUCATION
POLICY REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING
NOVEMBER 20, 2023
CARL T. SECOR ADMINISTRATION CENTER & VIA ZOOM—4:30 P.M.
MINUTES**

- I. Meeting was called to order at 4:30 p.m. by Debbie Kulick.
- II. **Policy Committee Members Present were:** George Andrews, Debbie Kulick, Jason Gullstrand (absent), and Lisa VanWhy.
- III. **School Personnel Present were:** Brian Baddick, Eric Forsyth, William Vitulli, Debra Wisotsky, Steve Zall.
- IV. **Members of the Board Present were:** Wayne Rohner
- V. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

RECOMMENDATION OF THE COMMITTEE: Motion was made by Lisa VanWhy to approve this agenda for November 20, 2023 (page 1), with members of the Committee reserving the right to add to the agenda and take further action as the Committee deems appropriate. Motion was seconded by George Andrews and carried unanimously, 3-0.

VI. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

RECOMMENDATION OF THE COMMITTEE: Motion was made by Lisa VanWhy to approve the minutes for September 18, 2023 (pages 1-2). There was no meeting in October. Motion was seconded by George Andrews and carried unanimously 3-0.

VII. **POLICIES FOR DISCUSSION:**

- a. Policy 317 Employees-Conduct/Disciplinary Procedures (Repeal Policy 417 & 517 – combine with Policy 317)—Ms. Kulick read the revisions to the combined Policy 317. Mr. Andrews inquired whether this policy applies to Board members. Mr. Forsyth replied, no, this is the 300s section of policy that applies to employees. Any of the Board member policies would be in section zero. Mr. Andrews asked about Item 9 on page 2, “carrying onto or possessing a weapon on school grounds without authorization from the Chief of School Police”. He asked why we removed school administrator and changed it to Chief of School Police. Ms. Kulick stated that the Chief would know if someone was authorized to carry a weapon; we would not want to open the school administrator up to that liability. Mr. Zall added, correct, we wouldn’t want that authorization at the building level. Mr. Andrews asked why only Chief and no one else. Mr. Forsyth replied, he is the School Safety and Security Administrator. He would be the appropriate school administrator; we specifically named it as the Chief of School Police. Mr. Andrews asked, what if he is not available? Mr. Forsyth said, then nobody should be carrying that weapon, there is no emergency to be carrying it. Mrs. VanWhy stated this policy is for employees who should obtain pre-authorization. Mr. Forsyth replied, the reason for that is, right now, the only employees who are authorized to carry weapons on school property are his employees, the school police. Mr. Andrews added, I thought it should be another person and not just the Chief. Perhaps it should say or designee. So, if he is on vacation, then he should have a designee taking his place. Mr. Forsyth said we can add that. The scope of this is very narrow to his own personnel. Mr. Forsyth added, going back to Item 4 on page 2, “including authorized possession or us of a grand master/master key or swipe card access”. I suggest we change that to just key or swipe card. You don’t necessarily need a grand master or a swipe card to gain unauthorized access. Ms. Kulick agreed that this change would be made prior to final Board approval and reminded the committee that Policy 417 & 517 are being repealed. Mr. Forsyth also noted that we began consolidating those

policies from the 400s and 500s section and this was the last one. They all have now been compressed into the 300 section for all employees.

- b. Policy 339 Uncompensated Leave—Ms. Kulick shared the revisions to Policy 339. Ms. Kulick asked if there is a 2% administrative fee added to the Cobra. Mr. Forsyth replied, yes for the applicable contract, in accordance with the exact wording of each contract. The reason for this is because the insurance that the employee is receiving for that first month is already paid for by the district. In the example of a retiree who is leaving the district, they can leave on the second or third of the month and their benefits continue until the end of the month because benefits have already been purchased through the end. We are doing the same thing here, so no employee who is on a leave is being double taxed or double charged by paying the healthcare contribution and their Cobra.
- c. Policy 616 Payment of Bills—Ms. Kulick read the revisions to Policy 616. Mr. Andrews asked, so every check can be signed electronically and doesn't have to have anyone's eyes on it or are we going to allow the president or vice president to verify if they are valid. Mrs. VanWhy stated, currently all checks are electronically signed since moving over to the new financial system. I had asked the Board what they wanted, as far as what needs to be looked at, but we never got that done. Some stuff is redundant that we pay every month, such as the electric and phone bill. We as Board members can always view the backup documentation. So, should we be putting a limit on checks over a certain amount of money? For example, the senior tax rebates, charter schools or MCTI payments which can be over \$100,000. It is a joint operating system where all the districts pay the same every month. It is visible on your Board documents. Again, we changed it as far as the electronic signature, but there is still no direction. The Board moving forward should decide if they want to specify an amount. Ms. Kulick read the list of exceptions for checks that can be issued by the CFO without Board approval. Mrs. VanWhy added some of that we already do and that would eliminate for instance, D'Huy Engineering projects that have already been approved. What's left. Mr. Andrews stated, we are trying to avoid duplicate payments and stuff like that. Ms. Kulick commented that only thing that might occasionally happen, is employee reimbursement or contractual drivers or something like that. Mrs. VanWhy stated, so when the checks come to be viewed, before and after electronic signatures, which consist of how many people signed off on that, before it got to the check being written. It's not like someone from whatever office says, it is a system of checks and balances and that has always been happening. Moving forward, if you want to put a limit on it, I don't know what's left out of this. Mr. Andrews replied, I don't either. It seems senior rebates and employee expenses, unless we have an issue. If it's not broken, don't fix it. Mrs. VanWhy stated you are getting the registry every month; you can bring it to question. Should we specify what's not being or the new president and vice-chair do not view the checks with the backup documentation. Mr. Andrews, or does everybody have the option to check if they find something. Everyone has the option but not on a whim. I believe if you have a question and 5 people agree with you to view this check and the documentation. Comes back around to now one Board member can view. Mr. Andrews said I believe we can ask, not tell anyone what to do, question is one thing, demanding is another. The committee agreed the policy is okay as written for the time being.
- d. Policy 808 Food Services—Ms. Kulick shared the revision to Policy 808 appears to be a new section on the USDA Nondiscrimination Statement. Mr. Andrews asked why we need to put this in. Ms. Kulick said I believe it is a legal requirement. Mr. Forsyth added it was a recommendation we received during our recent federal audit of our Food Services Program. Ms. Kulick stated now everyone has the information on how/where to report a complaint.
- e. Policy 819 Suicide Awareness, Prevention and Response (re-write per PSBA guidelines)—Ms. Kulick read the revisions to Policy 819. We are replacing the old 819 with this rewrite. It addresses a variety of areas, adding definitions, guidelines, education for both students and staff, methods of prevention, suicide prevention coordinators, methods of assessment and intervention, methods of response, documentation procedures, and the many resources available. Mr. Forsyth recommended a change of title on the bottom of page 7 from Director of Special Education to Director of Pupil Services. We don't want to reference a position that is not currently on the Organizational Chart. Mr. Andrews asked if this is going to require more staffing. Mr. Forsyth said it is a program that is not new. Dr. Vitulli commented that everything that is in here is already in place and does not require additional staff at this point. Mr. Andrews inquired about how much time we take with the kids teaching about this. Dr. Vitulli explained suicide awareness is part of their curriculum at the elementary, middle and high school. Mr. Andrews said it seems the more regulations they

put in place, the less time students have to learn math, science and English. Ms. Kulick noted it is embedded in curriculum, so they learn more than one thing at the same time.

Public Participation: None

VIII. ADVISORY RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION OF THE COMMITTEE: Motion was made by George Andrews to authorize and direct the administration to post the following item(s) with noted revisions for PUBLIC REVIEW during the month of November and subsequent Board action in December: Policies 317, 339, 616, 808, 819 and REPEAL of 417 and 517. Motion was seconded by Lisa VanWhy and carried unanimously 3-0.

IX. **ADJOURNMENT:** 5:13 p.m.

RECOMMENDATION OF THE COMMITTEE: Motion to adjourn was made by Lisa VanWhy. Motion was seconded by George Andrews and carried unanimously, 3-0.

Next meeting: TBD after the Board Reorganization Meeting on December 4, 2023.

Respectively submitted by,
Debra Wisotsky