

## SB - How We Work Jan 21, 2023 Retreat

### Printed handout

Communications amongst ourselves:

- “Sunshine laws” require that meetings/discussions about SB business with a majority of SB members (3 or more) be advertised in advance and open to the public:
  - True for virtual, telephonic, in-person, email, and text communications
  - Above does not apply to meetings that do not have a SB business purpose (eg, holiday party)
- Response times - Replying All in less than 4 hours can be construed as an online “meeting” for which no advance notice nor public attendance is provided - a violation of sunshine laws. Also true for VM, texting, and group editing.
- Be honest w/ each other
- Objective is to function better as a team, not how to be best friends
- Copy FD on emails to Cabinet Level staff
- Copy all on FOLLOW-UP questions and emails
- In general, no surprises
- Send SB member comments on presentation drafts to Board liaison to aggregate. Don't send individual comments to staff, unless specifically asked, b/c staff might run with thoughts/direction from 1 SB member
- Send informative emails amongst ourselves, not opinion. To communicate opinion, pick up the phone.
  
- Tell Chair first:
  - If you have overarching SB or APS related legal issues/questions you want to raise or want answers to
  - If you have *individual* legal issues affecting you only that you want to talk with Division Counsel about
  - If you are contemplating responding to a Media request for comment or an interview
    - PREFERRED: Send reporter/media contact to SCR and let SCR handle it. If SCR believes you should grant the media request, they will advise you.
- Confidentiality
  - Everything occurring in a Closed meeting is confidential
  - **Francisco:** Label confidential communications from staff as “Confidential”
    - Memos sent to SB members in response to Follow-Up questions are often shared with community members. Staff needs to prominently label confidential material as such
  - Be careful when writing up Notes or leaving VMs from meetings that no confidential material is revealed

Talking to Community Members

- **Speak as one SB member; don't speak for the SB except to relate SB action as a result of a vote.**

- Err on the side of vague. If it has been discussed in public (meeting/worksession) point the community member to that recording. If it has not, you can always say “That has not been discussed, but I am happy to bring it to my colleagues’ attention”
- Don’t rely on social media for description of a problem. There is ALWAYS another side to the story
- Don’t promise “I’ll take care of that”. You can promise to follow up (“I will raise that with FD/staff”)
  - Send their concern to cognizant staff member & copy FD
- Research/get staff vetting before recommending adjusted policy/practice
- Copy [school.board@apsva.us](mailto:school.board@apsva.us) on replies to constituents
  - PREFERRED: “TY for writing me. I am copying my SB colleagues for their awareness and for the Chair to respond.”

#### Communicating with Staff

- In general - no surprises
- Don't give direction to staff
- Don’t talk – or even listen – to staff members about working conditions issues:
  - Under the Collective Bargaining process, employee working conditions issues have to be brought through the union to the Supt’s designee
  - It might rise to the level of a grievance someday which then means you have had *ex parte* communication with that staff member without other SB members being aware and without the Supt’s representative being present.
  - PREFERRED: Alert staff member before your meeting with them:
 

“I want to make sure we have a clear understanding of the parameters of our meeting. I’m happy and able to discuss issues you have in your role as an APS parent or as an individual APS employee. However, items and issues related to or advocated for an employee group(s) are more appropriate for discussion through the Collective Bargaining process and through an Exclusive Representative. Thanks for your understanding.