



Salem Derby, Mayor

EASTHAMPTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

EASTHAMPTON MUNICIPAL BUILDING

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Michelle Balch, Superintendent

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MASC (Massachusetts Association of School Committees) RETREAT

In Person Only
50 Payson Avenue, 2nd Floor

January 17, 2026
9:00 A.M.

Present School Committee Members: Chair Laura Scott, Mayor Salem Derby, Bonnie Atkins, Eric Guyette, Megan Harvey, Sam Hunter, and Linda Markee

Administration: Superintendent Michelle Balch, EdD and Director of Business Services Julia Saari-Franks

MASC: Liz Lafond, Western MA Field Director and Tracy Novick, Central MA Field Director

I. Call to Order Chair Laura Scott called the meeting to order at 9:15 A.M.

II. MASC Training

Liz Lafond and Tracy Novick from MASC came to provide details and training to the Easthampton School Committee members regarding the following four main areas: Committee Member Responsibilities, Open Meeting Law, Committee Member Code of Ethics and Budget Roles. For more details, please see the attached document.

VI. Adjournment

Move to adjourn the meeting

Moved: Eric Guyette, Seconded: Megan Harvey, Motion passed 6-0-0

Final Roll Call: Chair Laura Scott, Bonnie Atkins, Eric Guyette, Megan Harvey, Sam Hunter, Linda Markee

Meeting Adjourned at 1:11 P.M.

Signature



PREPARING TO WORK TOGETHER

Easthampton School Committee

January 17, 2026

Today's plan:



COMMITTEE
MEMBER
RESPONSIBILITIES



OPEN
MEETING LAW



COMMITTEE
MEMBER CODE
OF ETHICS



BUDGET
ROLES



COMMITTEE MEMBER
RESPONSIBILITIES

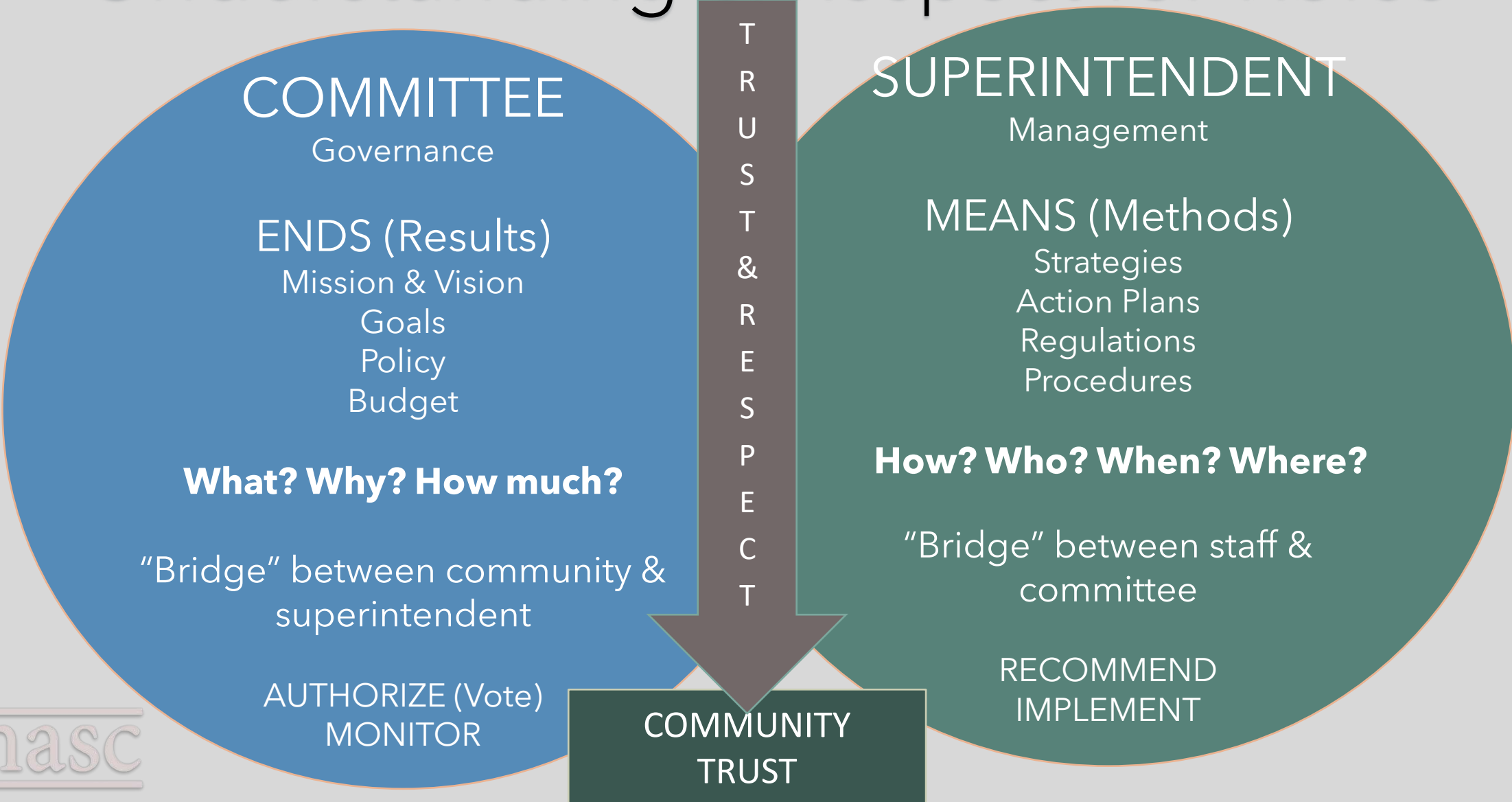
COMMITTEE

Power exercised through
official action at properly
posted meeting
Govern through policy
Financial resources
Engage the community
Sustain SC/Superintendent
Relationship
Employer of Record

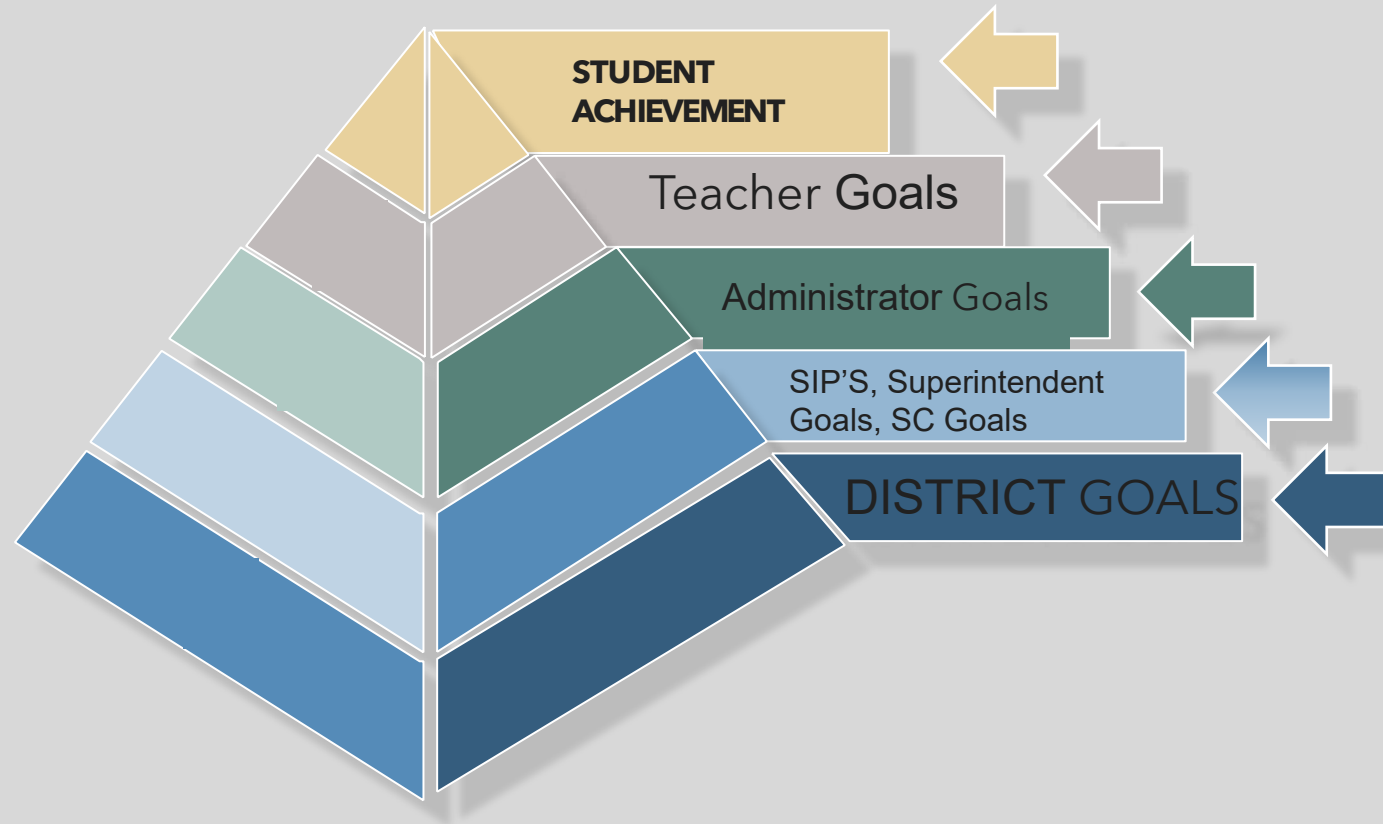
INDIVIDUAL MEMBER

No individual authority
No greater power than any
other qualified voter
Contribute to & communicate
vision & goals
Ask critical questions
Support committee decisions
Be dedicated to the work on
behalf of students

Understanding & Respect for Roles

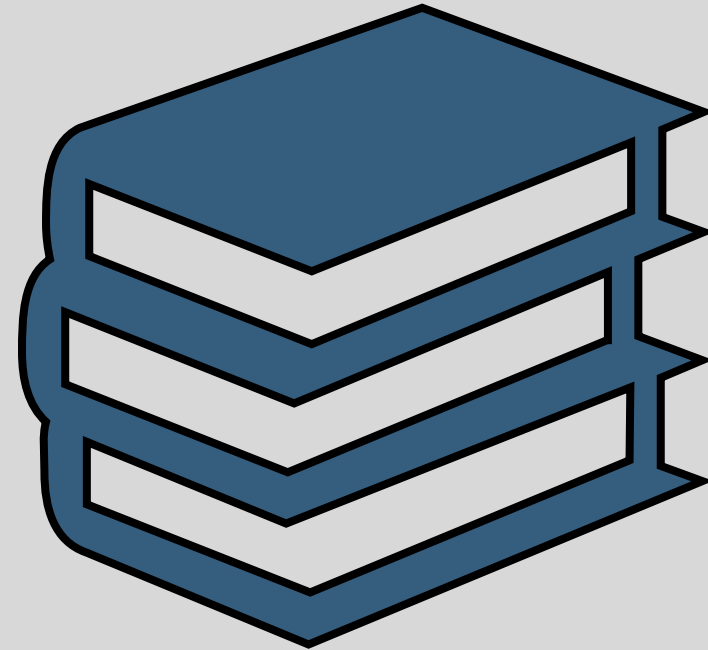


Goals



Policy....

- Uses clear statements to set forth the purposes and prescribes, in general terms, the organization and programs of a school district.
- Creates a framework within which the Superintendent and staff can discharge duties with positive direction.
- Is adopted by the Committee.



Budget

Fiscal year budget

Fiscal policy

Monitoring over year

- Transfers
- Warrants



masc

Personnel

Hire & contract with Superintendent

Hire & retain Legal Counsel

Advise and Consent:

Assistant Superintendent

School Business Manager

Director of Special Education

Physicians, Nurses, Attendance Officer

Establish personnel policy

Establish "compensation"

Employer of Record



masc



OPEN MEETING LAW

Purpose

- OML provides balance between government accountability and government efficiency.
- Ensures transparency by public bodies requiring:
 - Advance Notice
 - Open Deliberations
 - Public Access

Open Meeting Law Basics

- Notice must be posted, with the agenda, for all meetings
- Meetings must be open to the public unless the public body enters into executive session
- Minutes must be kept for open and executive session

Open Meeting Law

M.G.L. c. 30A §§ 18-25

Definitions Under OML

Meetings & Deliberations

- **Meeting:**
 - A deliberation by a public body with respect to any matter within the body's jurisdiction
- **Deliberation:**
 - Oral, written or electronic communications on public business between or among a quorum of a public body
 - *quorum: majority of members*

Deliberation

- **Allowable Exclusions:**
 - Distribution of meeting agenda, scheduling or procedural information
 - Distribution of reports or documents to be discussed, provided no opinion of a member of the public body is expressed

During the Open Meeting

Access & Participation - Under the Governor's Emergency Order in effect through March 31, 2025

- All public bodies may meet with 100% remote participation with no local action;
- All remote participants must be audible to all persons present;
- All votes are by roll call;
- Public **must** have real time access to the meeting *except for reasons of economic hardship*;
 - Either the public is allowed to attend in person, or a remote option is available in real time

Public Participation

- Public may attend open session of meeting (in-person or virtually upon the decision of the public body)
- Public may not address public body without permission of chair or otherwise disrupt meeting
- Public may take audio or video recording of open session upon notification to chair and subject to reasonable requirements
- Chair must inform other attendees of recording at beginning of meeting

Executive Session

- There are only ten reasons for executive session, which is an **exception** to meeting in public session.
- In all cases, the exceptions are to protect the public interest.
- All executive sessions open in public session; the reason for moving to executive session must be stated.
- Minutes must still be taken.
- All votes are by roll call.

OML & Social Media

Social Media

- Members may communicate with members of the public through any social media platform. **However,** deliberation may violate OML. ***Proceed with Caution.***

Listserve

- Members may subscribe to a listserv. **However,** where a quorum of members of a public body subscribe, the public body risks unlawful deliberation. ***Proceed with Caution*** related to matters within the jurisdiction of the public body.

OML & Electronic Messaging

Use of electronic messaging to communicate with other public body members during a meeting

With a few exceptions, any use of electronic messaging by public body members to communicate with a quorum of public body members, during or outside of a meeting, may constitute private deliberation, which is prohibited by the Open Meeting Law.

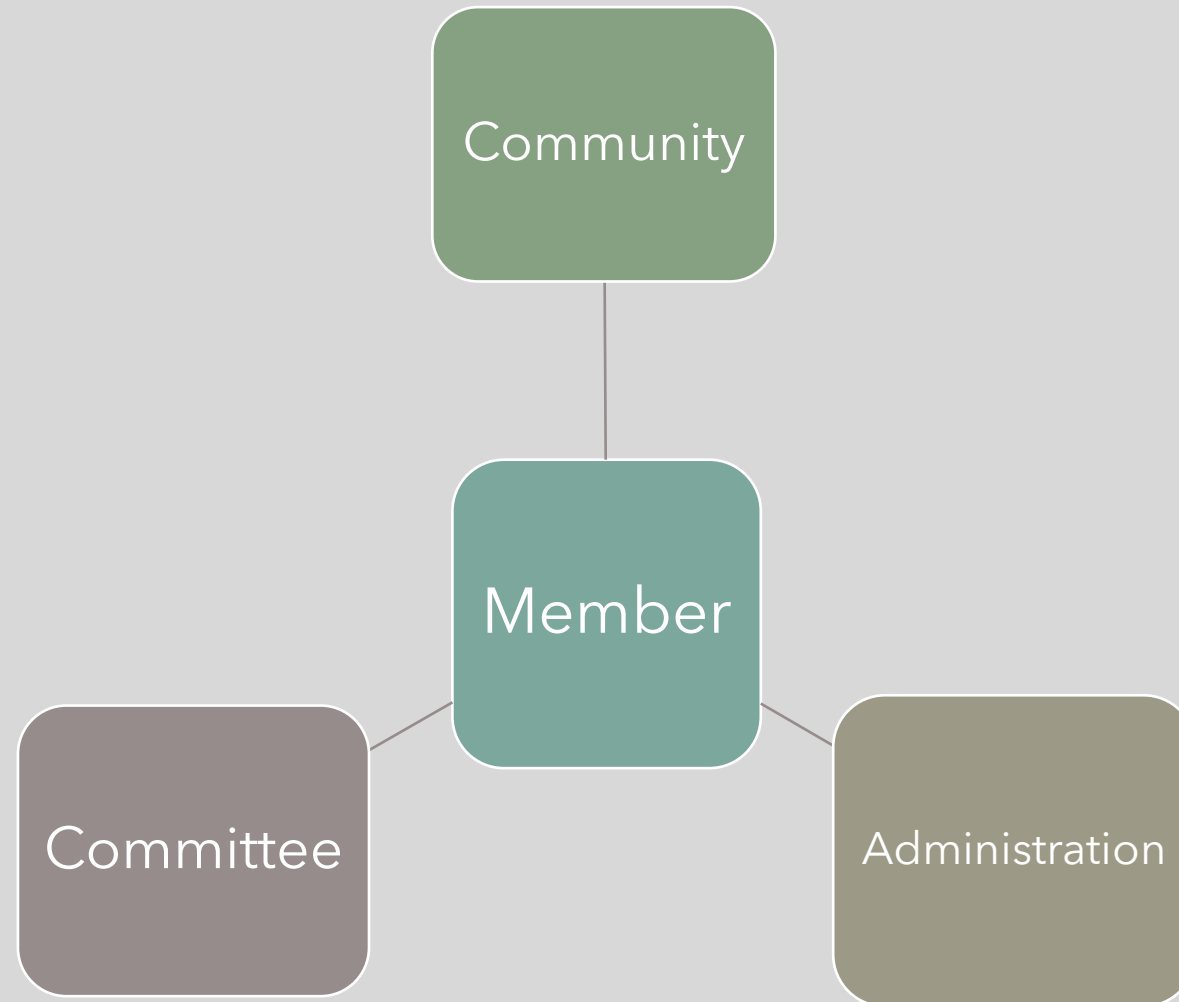
Electronic messaging during a meeting by less than a quorum of the public body's members, while not directly prohibited by the Open Meeting Law, is discouraged if those electronic communications are not shared at the meeting with the members of the public who are present.



COMMITTEE MEMBER
CODE OF ETHICS

School Committee Member Ethics

Massachusetts Association of School Committees Code of Ethics



School Committee
Member Ethics
Massachusetts
Association of School
Committees Code of
Ethics

A School Committee
member in their relations
with their community
should:

The logo for the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) features the lowercase letters "masc" in a serif font, positioned between two horizontal lines.

Realize that their primary responsibility is to the children.

Recognize that their basic function is to be policy making and not administrative.

Remember that they are one of a team and must abide by, and carry out, all Committee decisions once they are made.

Be well informed concerning the duties of a Committee member on both a local and state level.

Remember that they represent the entire community at all times.

Accept the office as a Committee member as means of unselfish service with no intent to "play politics," in any sense of the word, or to benefit personally from their Committee activities.

Note what this means:

- Your first responsibility is to the students.
- You have no position that is beyond that of MEMBER of the Committee. It does not exist apart from that.
- You know that you have other roles, but to the district staff, your Committee membership is always what they will see first. Always be mindful of that.
- Any administrative responsibility or decision must be redirected to the administration.

School
Committee
Member Ethics
Massachusetts
Association of School
Committees Code of
Ethics

School Committee member in
their relations with school
administration should:



Endeavor to establish sound, clearly defined policies which will direct and support the administration.

Recognize and support the administrative chain of command and refuse to act on complaints as an individual outside the administration.

Give the chief administrator full responsibility for discharging their professional duties and hold them responsible for acceptable results.

Refer all complaints to the administrative staff for solution and only discuss them at Committee meetings if such solutions fail.

Note what this means:

- Act only as a member of the committee.
- Act via agreed upon protocols in communicating with the superintendent, other administrators, and other staff.
- Work with other members through deliberation if reports or information are needed for the community.
- Stay within the policy/budget/goals/evaluation position.
- Refer members of the public to the appropriate district contact.

School Committee Member Ethics

Massachusetts Association
of School Committees Code
of Ethics

School Committee in their
relations with their fellow
Committee members should:

The logo for the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) features the lowercase letters "masc" in a serif font, positioned between two horizontal lines.

Recognize that action at official meetings is binding and that they alone cannot bind the Committee outside of such meetings

Realize that they should not make statements or promises of how they will vote on matters that will come before the Committee.

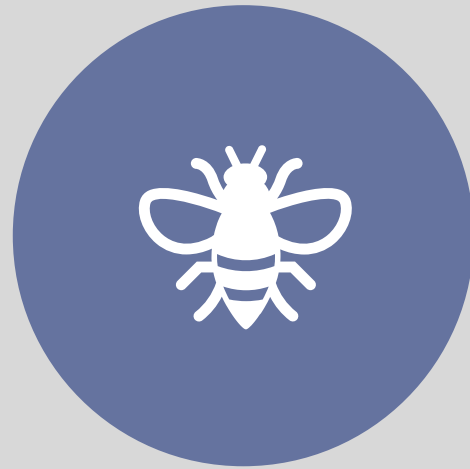
Uphold the intent of executive sessions and respect the privileged communications that exists in executive sessions.

Not withhold pertinent information on school matters or personnel problems, either from members of their own Committee or from members of other Committees who may be seeking help or information on school problems

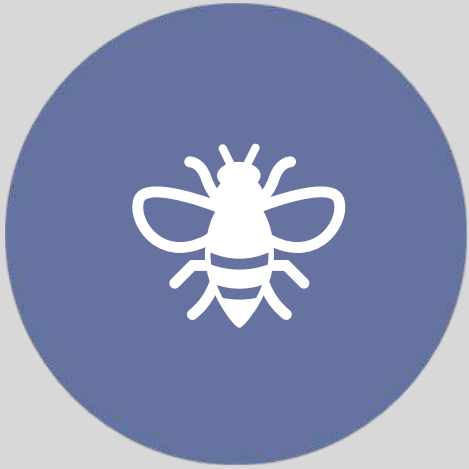
Make decisions only after all facts on a question have been presented and discussed.

Note what this means:

- Act as a member of the Committee even when in the minority position.
- Do your part to ensure the business of the district can be **conducted** in meetings (stay on task, defer to the Chair in running the meeting, redirect as needed)
- Recognize that decisions are made in Committee meetings as a result of deliberation.
- Share information and knowledge with other members to strengthen the Committee, and thus the district, as a whole.
- Make decisions only after all information is shared and matters are deliberated.



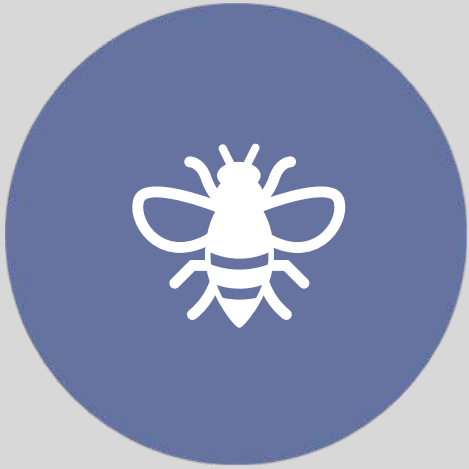
BUDGET ROLES



What information should the School Committee receive ahead of the release of the annual budget?

Preliminary budget

Any preliminary trends or estimates that may impact the budget discussions.



What is the proper cost center level at which the annual budget should be approved?

Cost Centers

- The level of detail should make sense for your district.
- It should be enough detail to know that goals are being supported.

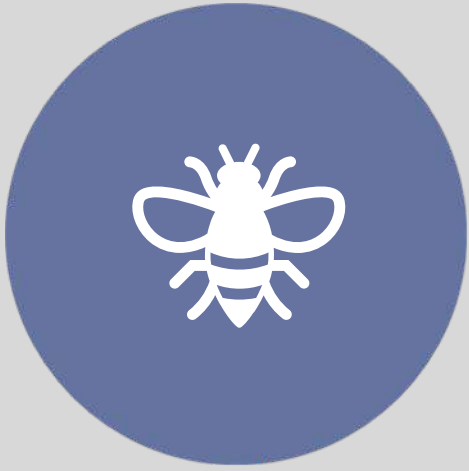


How often should the School Committee get updates on the budget?

What should that include?

Quarterly reports

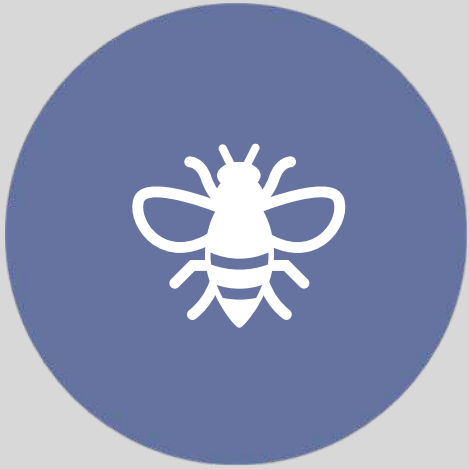
- Budget reports should go to School Committee at least quarterly.
- Should include adopted amount, expended amount, and projected to end of year.
 - Transfers between and among cost centers require school committee approval.



What, if anything,
does the School
Committee have to
do with grants?

Grants

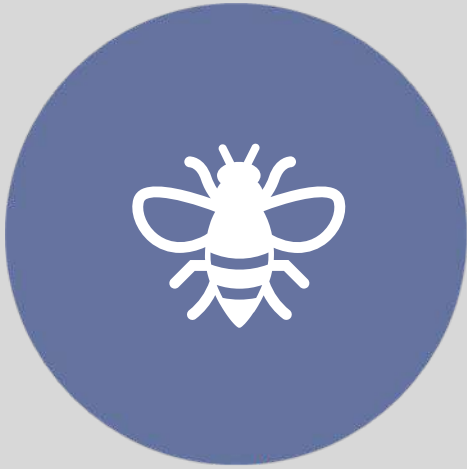
- "any amounts received by the School Committee" – grants require approval before expenditure
- Grant budget and supporting narrative should go before Committee
 - Committee should ensure grants support goals



When a donation comes in to a classroom or to the district, what is supposed to happen?

Donations

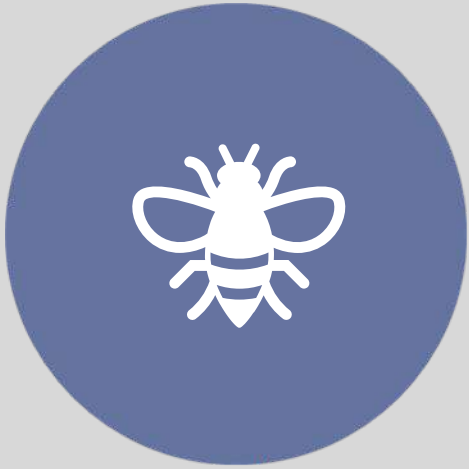
- “may accept grants OR GIFTS” – gifts MUST be accepted by the Committee
- There are no exceptions or minimums, and this power may not be transferred.



How much does the School Committee have to do with collective bargaining?

Collective bargaining

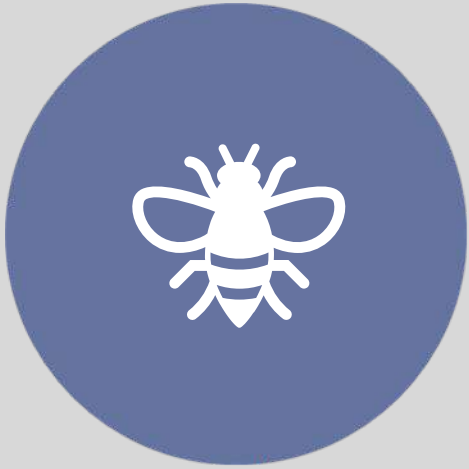
- The School Committee is the employer of record for the purposes of collective bargaining. It should be for the Committee—as a body—to determine how involved it is.



What oversight does the School Committee have of revolving funds?

Revolving funds


- Revolving funds are established by MGL and are used to support specific purposes, such as athletics, culinary programs, building rentals, adult education, summer school, “shall be expended by the school committee.”



What financial assessment should be done of proposed new projects?

New projects

- The Committee should expect a line-item budget and supporting narrative that discusses costs and assumptions.
- Ensure numbers are conservative and account for the unforeseen.



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