

Meeting Notice

Board/Committee Name: Orange Elementary School Committee

Day/Date: July 22, 2024

Time of Meeting: 5:00PM

Location: Fisher Hill Elementary School

Media Center

59 Dexter St.

Orange, MA 01364



Orange Elementary School Committee Workshop

MINUTES

1. Call to Order - Mallory Ellis called the meeting to order at 5:02pm.
Members present: Josefa Scherer, Yarelyn Ramos-Martinez, Frank Hains, Jessica Reske
Other present: Dr. Liz, Dr. Lewis, Michele Tontodonato, Crystal Clarke, Adam Dupere.
Minutes taken by Christine Rodriguez.
2. Legal Training - Adam Dupere, district council, reviewed the following and provided a handout on Open meeting law and an executive session quick reference guide (on file).
 - a. Open Meeting Law - Adam Dupere explained serial communication. The committee discussed providing a virtual option for viewing the meeting but not allowing public comment. Adam explained that the School Committee has the right to warn individuals who are disrupting the meeting and public participation is optional.
 - b. Deliberation
 - c. Quorum
 - d. Executive Session - Adam Dupere went over the purposes of executive session.
 - e. Grievance Process - Adam Dupere went over the grievance procedure and when the school committee should be involved. Most grievances get resolved before getting to the School Committee.
 - f. How school committee members handle complaints/ Steps they should take
 - Adam explained that there are penalties for violation of the open meeting law.
 - Josefa asked about alternates on subcommittee meetings. Adam explained that alternates should only be there when needed. They can be there if topics are of personal interest to the member but will not be able to participate in the meeting.
 - Exit Interviews - Adam explained the reason they don't recommend exit interviews is most of the time the employees that are leaving are disgruntled. Some complaints are very biased and you have to investigate each and every complaint mentioned in the interview. Investigating a very lengthy process and it can lead to lawsuits and litigations. Something the district can do instead is general surveys with staff.
 - Add discussion about the risk of having exit interviews to a future meeting.

- Mallory confirmed with Adam that the committee should not respond to comments at public meetings.

3. Access Road Lighting (discussion)

Mallory explained that Dr. Liz received a call from Sherry McIntish. She wanted her concerns known regarding the access road. Her first concern is that the lights on the access road shine into her bedroom. She had spoken to Marty Goulet and Bruce Scherer when the road was being installed and they told her that the lights would not be on at night unless it were for an event. Marty, our OPM on the project, said he never had that conversation with her. Dr. Liz said that after consulting with the Fire Chief and the Police Chief, it's clear that turning off the lights could pose a significant safety risk. A poorly lit road at night could potentially encourage illegal activities. This information is crucial for the decision-making process and for understanding the potential consequences of Sherry's request. Dr. Liz stated that she contacted our insurance carrier, who indicated that not having the lights on creates a liability issue for the district. Also, per Adam Dupere, there is case law; if someone were to get injured on the property (access road), we could be liable if the lights were not on.

The other complaint regarding the access road was that cars were going up the road the wrong way. She said that vehicles go up the access road between 5:30 and 6:30 in the morning. At that hour, the OES staff going toward the building are custodians and possibly cafeteria workers. Dr. Liz can address this concern directly with the staff.

Josefa suggested turning off that one light that shines into the window. Michele will talk to Ian about programming that single light to be turned off.

4. Student Handbook (vote needed)

Dr. Liz stated that the handbook was completely revised so it will digitally link from the content page to the section clicked on. Adam has received a copy of the handbook and will review it to ensure it complies with current regulations. Frank suggested rewording the negative words regarding playground rules.

On a motion made by Josefa Scherer and seconded by Yarelyn Ramos-Martinez, the committee voted unanimously to approve the presented 2024-2025 OES handbook, including any legal updates recommended by council. Roll call taken by Mallory Ellis.

5. Letter to Town Officials (vote needed)

Mallory explained that at the last meeting a request was made to have the School Committee write a letter to the town officials regarding the towns request to have OES staff take a pay freeze, but they did make the same request for all other departments. At the recent town meeting, the question was asked directly of the town administrator if he had requested a pay freeze for any departments other than the schools, and he said he had not. A drafted letter was provided for the committee to review and consider to be sent to the Town of Orange.

On a motion made by Josefa Scherer and seconded by Frank Hains, the committee I voted unanimously to approve that the reviewed letter regarding seeking a pay freeze from OES staff and not other Town departments be sent to Town Officials. Roll call taken by Mallory Ellis.

The back to school picnic will be on 8/23 and the School Committee will have a table at the event. They discussed the idea of having time periods for parent's to come to the school to get their student's teacher assignments during the week of 8/12.

6. Adjournment - ***On a motion made by Frank Hains and seconded by Yarelyn Ramos-Martinez, the committee voted to adjourn at 6:48pm.***

Approved: 9/9/24

Signature of Secretary: _____

The agenda reflects topics that the Chair reasonably anticipates will be discussed.

Public Comment Protocols

The School Committee welcomes public comment on items that are within the scope of the School Committee's responsibilities. The Public Comment agenda item is reserved for this purpose. Members of the public wishing to address the Committee should be aware of the following guidelines:

- The Chair will recognize those wishing to speak and give them the floor. Only persons recognized by the Chair may speak. For purposes of the minutes, speakers should identify themselves at the beginning of their remarks.
- The purpose of Public Comment is to receive input from the community, not to engage in prolonged conversation with the Committee. The Chair will ensure that any comment or question that requires a response from the committee or the School Department will be addressed in a timely manner.
- All comments should be addressed through the Chair, not any individual committee member or to others in attendance.
- Speakers are expected to respect confidentiality. This includes the confidentiality of the speaker's own child/ren as well as that of school staff and personnel.