



BOARD OF EDUCATION OF HARFORD COUNTY

MEMBER HANDBOOK

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Harford County Public Schools

102 South Hickory Avenue

Bel Air, MD 21014

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FOREWORD

This handbook advises members of the Board of Education of Harford County of the requirements and responsibilities of their office. It sets forth and describes the most significant responsibilities and requirements of Board membership and the provisions of law and regulation, Board policy, and protocols that govern the performance and actions of Board members as they carry out the duties of their office.

This handbook does not contain an exhaustive list of all the requirements and responsibilities of Board membership. Rather, it serves as an overview of the most important regulations and responsibilities of Board membership. To the extent this handbook sets forth specific rules of procedure not otherwise outlined in law, regulation, or Board policy, such specific rules are binding upon the Board. In the event of a conflict between this handbook and current law, regulation, or policy, the latter would supersede this handbook.

BOARD HANDBOOK

I. Legal and Historical Background

A. Historical Background

Public education provides the foundation for American democracy. The Maryland Constitution recognized the importance of education by mandating a system of public schools. Article VIII Section 1 of the Maryland Constitution provides as follows:

"The General Assembly, at its First Session after the adoption of this Constitution, shall by law establish throughout the State a thorough and efficient System of Free Public Schools; and shall provide by taxation, or otherwise, for their maintenance."

Public schools in Maryland were first authorized by the Maryland State Constitution of 1864 pursuant to the state constitutional provision quoted above. A Board of school commissioners oversaw the Harford County public schools until 1916, when the Maryland General Assembly passed legislation that designated the Board of school commissioners in each county as the Board of Education and designated the chief officer of the county school system as the Superintendent of schools.

Public schools in Harford County were segregated based on race until 1957, when a plan of desegregation was initiated. Full desegregation of the public schools was accomplished in the 1965-1966 school year.

The history of Harford County's public education system is long and proud. Service as a member of the Board of Education is an honor and privilege.

The Appendix contains additional resources that provide more in-depth information about the history of public education in Harford County.

B. Legal Status of the Board of Education

Maryland law authorizes and establishes the Board of Education of Harford County. Specifically, Section 3-103 of the Education Article of the Maryland Code mandates a county Board of education for each county. Section 3-104 provides that each county Board is a body corporate and politic of the state of Maryland, has perpetual

existence, and may sue or be sued. Section 3-104 also provides that each county Board is to be referred to by the name of the county it serves. Thus, the Board of Education of Harford County is a distinct and separate legal entity.

The school system is referred to as the Harford County Public Schools (HCPS). Thus, the Board of Education and HCPS are sometimes used synonymously, but these are separate legal entities. The legal name for the entire public school system is the Board of Education of Harford County.

C. Relationship of Board of Education of Harford County with Federal, State and County Government

Under Maryland law, the Board of Education is a distinct legal entity. The Board of Education of Harford County and other local school Boards in Maryland are generally considered state agencies for legal purposes.

As a state agency, the Board of Education of Harford County is separate and independent from the Harford County Government, although it receives a substantial portion of its funding from the county.

The Board of Education of Harford County, as are all Boards in Maryland, is subject to the authority of the Maryland State Board of Education (MSBE) and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). The MSBE has general authority over educational matters in the state. The MSDE is under the authority of the State Board. The MSDE administers the State Board's policies, rules, and regulations. The State Superintendent of Schools oversees the MSDE. The relationship between and among the MSBE, MSDE and the State Superintendent of Schools is substantially similar to that between and among the Board of Education of Harford County, the Harford County Superintendent of Schools, and HCPS administration at the local level.

While the Maryland General Assembly passes state laws governing public education, the MSBE issues state regulations governing public education. Such regulations, also called "MSBE bylaws," are found in Title 13A of the Code of Maryland Administrative Regulations, also known as COMAR.

The chief federal agency that oversees and administers federal education law is the United States Department of Education (USDOE). This agency administers, in conjunction with the

Maryland State Department of Education, such laws as the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB), the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA), the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESS), and the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act* (FERPA).

Appendix B contains links to statutory references regarding the legal status of the Board.

II. Authority and Responsibility of the Board of Education

A. General Control Over Educational Matters in the County

Under Maryland law, the Board of Education of Harford County is charged with the general authority and control over educational matters in Harford County. Appendix C contains a link to the current Strategic Plan. This document sets forth the Board's goals over a three-year period and should be updated at least every two years.

1. The Board will utilize a Strategic Planning Committee as a subgroup, not to exceed four (4) Board members to review and update the Strategic Plan during the spring of each year, with a target of Board re-approval and re-publishing the Plan in August every two years. The President will guide the Board in discussing members, conducting subgroup meetings, and arranging potential retreats to support the review and update of the Plan. The Plan will include the agreed-upon priorities of the Board, expectations for alignment of actions to support these priorities, and metrics to gauge the success of efforts and align with the Superintendent's annual evaluation process.
2. The Board authorizes Committees to support its responsibilities. In general, three types of committees are used: task-oriented, statutory, or advisory. Task-oriented committees are typically focused on a specific task and may be terminated upon task completion or could be a standing committee for ongoing tasks. Statutory committees are required by law and do not have a termination point. Advisory committees can be either task-oriented or statutory. In addition to local committees, Board members may participate in state and federal committees. For a list of commonly used, specific standing, and other committees the Board uses, see the sections below and Appendix D.
3. The number of Board members who participate in a

committee will be limited to four members, to not constitute a quorum and remain compliant with the *Open Meetings Act*. All committees and committee members must be voted on and approved by the Board. The Board liaison will maintain a current list of all committees, committee members, and meeting information (schedule, agenda, meeting summaries, and minutes) and post these to the Board Docs page in Microsoft TEAMS. Committee tasks or reports involving a quorum or full Board participation will occur in an open session.

Appendix D contains charter that guides the Board of Education's local committees. Every two years, the Board develops the charge for each Committee, specifying the Committee Chair, membership, and products expected for each Committee to align the Committee's efforts with the Board's Strategic Plan.

B. Board Policy

Pursuant to Maryland law, the Board is charged with establishing the educational policies of the county school system. Adoption of policies is another method by which the Board exercises its general authority to govern educational matters within the county.

Policies adopted by the Board of Education usually address systemic matters requiring district-wide consistency to achieve the Board's goals. Policy is a Board's broad statement of direction that sets a course of action and provides guidance for students, district employees, community members, and the Board itself.

Administrative or operational matters usually fall within the Superintendent's purview. The Superintendent is responsible for developing administrative procedures needed to implement Board policies. Not every policy will require an accompanying procedure, and some policies will require more than one. The Board of Education should not adopt administrative procedures but should review them as part of the Board's oversight role.

The Board policies are in the Board Policy Manual, which is on the Board's website. The Policy Manual contains several topical sections that pertain to various aspects of the Board's responsibilities and functions.

The Policy Manual includes policies that govern the Board's policy development, review, and revision process. Generally, the Board

must wait 30 days before final action regarding proposed new or modified policies. Appendix E contains a link to the Board Policy Manual.

The Board is assisted in policy development by the Board Policy Review Committee. The procedure for policy development is conceptualized in the following flow diagram:

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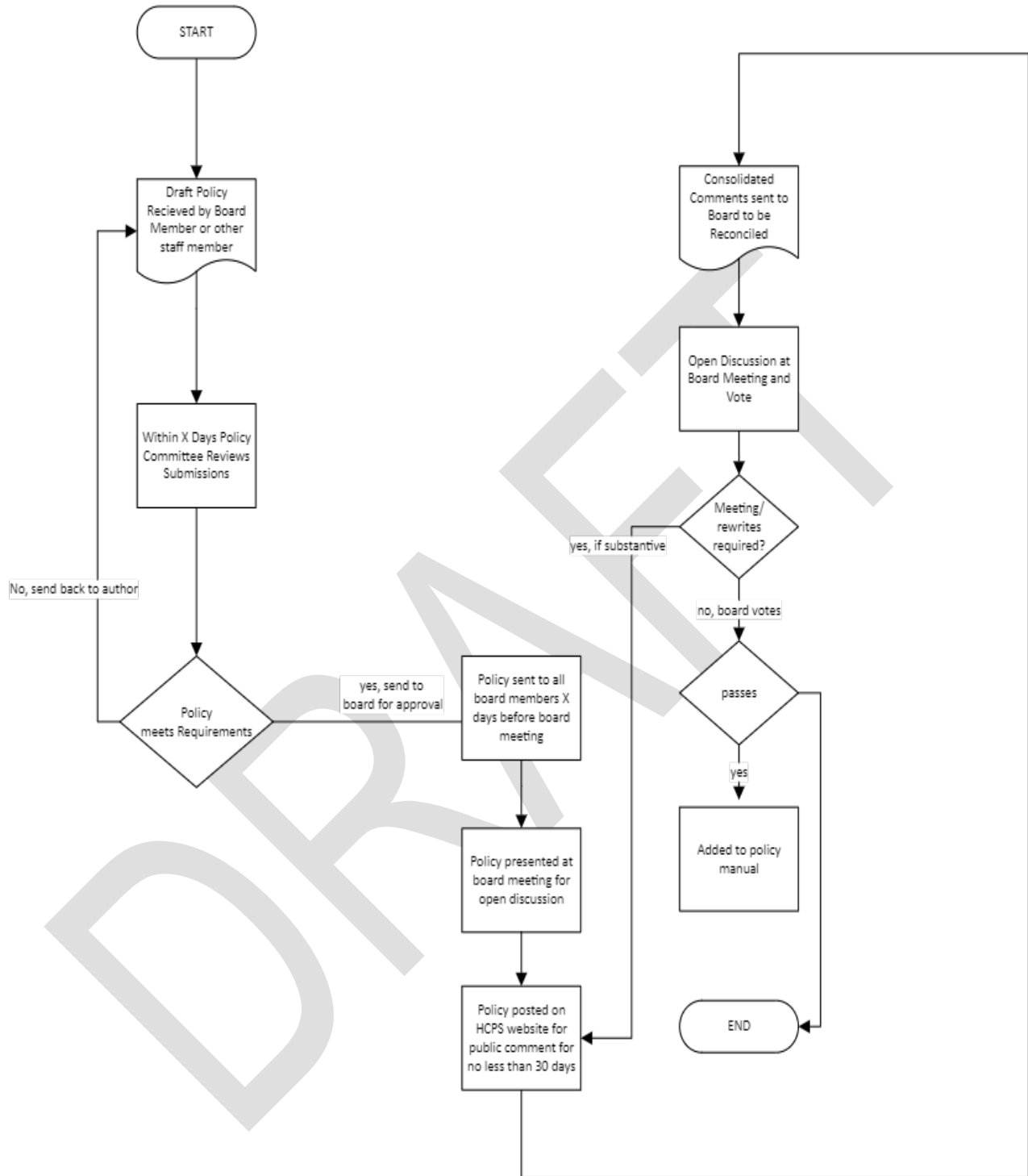


Figure 1. Policy Creation Process.

C. Other Statutory Duties

In addition to the Board's general authority over educational matters in Harford County and policymaking, Maryland law sets forth many specific duties and responsibilities for the Board of Education. Some of the most significant of these are as follows.

1. Budget

a. Capital

Adopting the annual Capital Budget is one of the Board's significant responsibilities. The capital budget includes construction and planning funds for new facilities, modernization, and renovations; furniture and equipment associated with these projects; and countywide maintenance efforts. Facilities issues include building utilization, educational program capacity, enrollment projections, boundary changes, and school closings. Financing for capital projects comes primarily from three sources: local bonds, local transfer tax, and state school construction funds.

The Superintendent reviews all Harford County Public Schools facilities decisions and capital budget requests each spring. The Board holds a public hearing in July to receive the public's priorities for new facilities, additions, and renovations. By the third week of September, the Superintendent will have published a proposed Capital Budget and a five-year and long-range Capital Improvement Program.

The Board holds a public hearing on the proposed Capital Budget, discusses it at work sessions and in the Budget Committee, and adopts a Capital Budget Request to submit to the Interagency Committee on School Construction (IAC) in October. This budget may be revised when the Board adopts its Operating Budget Request in February. The final adoption of the Operating Budget does not occur until June 1, after the final funding allocation decisions of the IAC and the Harford County Government are known.

b. Operating Budget

Adopting the annual operating budget is one of the

Board's major responsibilities. The operating budget includes salaries, contractual services, supplies and materials, furniture and equipment, and other funds necessary for the school system's daily operation. The Superintendent develops the operating budget after receiving input from the Board, staff, and stakeholders. The Board Budget Committee works with the HCPS budget staff as they develop the draft budget and finalize recommendations to the Superintendent.

The Superintendent presents his/her proposed budget to the Board in December and recommends its adoption to the Board members. Through the Budget Committee, the Board holds work sessions before the budget's adoption to secure additional information on the various line items and categories of the proposed budget and on items the Board is considering. The public is invited to voice their priorities and reactions to the Superintendent's proposed budget at these meetings.

The budget must be submitted to the County Executive by the first week of February of each year. While the Executive may reduce the budget before sending it to the County Council, the Council may restore all or a portion of the reductions. The Council has the authority to adopt the education budget by overall and category totals but usually extends the courtesy to the Board to recommend category totals after the Council has decided the overall budget amount. After the Council's final action on or before June 15, the Board makes final adjustments to the budget no later than June 30. During the fiscal year, the Board may transfer funds within categories but must request approval from the County Executive and County Council for any transfers among categories.

c. Budget Committee

The Board's Budget Committee assists in developing, reviewing, and approving the budget. The Budget Committee is chartered in accordance with Appendix D and will have three or four Board members and at least two staff members who are appointed by the President and Superintendent, respectively, each year. The HCPS Chief Financial Officer or designee will be a member of the Budget Committee.

2. Personnel

Pursuant to Maryland law, it is the responsibility of the Superintendent to recommend the appointment of all certificated persons to be employed by the Board of Education, i.e., teachers and most administrative and supervisory positions. The Board, by vote in an open session, acts on such recommendations.

The Superintendent also notifies the Board of personnel transfers among administrative and supervisory positions. While these are not subject to Board approval, the Board shall be advised in advance so that the Superintendent can address any inquiries prior to his/her announcement at a regular public Board meeting.

3. Collective Bargaining

Pursuant to Maryland law, through the Board-designated representative, the Board of Education engages in contract negotiations with bargaining representatives or unions representing the five employee units of the Board. Maryland law requires that the Board designate specific units of employees for collective bargaining purposes and requires the Board to determine which employees shall be placed in which bargaining unit. The bargaining representatives (or unions) are as follows:

- a. The Association of Public School Administrators and Supervisors of Harford County (APSASHC);
- b. The Harford County Education Association (HCEA);
- c. The Harford County Educational Services Council (HCESC);
- d. The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Workers (AFSCME); and
- e. The Association of Harford County Administrative Technical and Supervisory Professionals (AHCATSP).

These bargaining representatives represent all Board employees except those excluded because they are directly involved in negotiations (e.g., the Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources, the Chief of Administration, and the General Counsel).

The purpose of these contract negotiations is to reach labor agreements with the Board of Education's employees regarding wages, salaries, and working conditions or other matters subject to bargaining. By law, the Board of Education is permitted to meet in closed session to discuss issues related to contract negotiations

with the employee organizations. Board Members, the Superintendent, and all staff must maintain the confidentiality of matters discussed during closed sessions. Appendix F contains Subtitle 4 and 5 of Title 6 of the Education Article which set forth the legal framework regarding collective bargaining.

4. Appointment of Superintendent

Pursuant to Maryland law, the Board of Education appoints the Superintendent of Schools. This is one of the Board of Education's significant responsibilities.

The Superintendent of Schools enters into a four-year contract with the board of education upon being appointed. The Board and the Superintendent negotiate the terms and conditions of the contract.

The Superintendent may not be removed from office unless the Board petitions the State Superintendent of Schools to remove the Superintendent for cause.

Appendix G contains selected statutory provisions pertaining to the appointment of the Superintendent.

5. Appellate Function

Pursuant to Maryland law, the Board also hears and acts on appeals of decisions made by the Superintendent. This appellate or quasi- adjudicatory function is a significant responsibility of the Board.

The Superintendent of Schools is the chief executive officer. As such, the Superintendent is responsible for implementing the laws and regulations relating to public schools and the policies and regulations of the Board of Education. In so doing, the Superintendent makes decisions directly affecting students, parents, employees, and other stakeholders.

Most of the Superintendent's decisions regarding the administration of the school system may be appealed by persons who are directly affected by the decision. Such appeals are reviewed and decided by the Board acting in its appellate or quasi-adjudicatory function. Examples of the types of matters that the Board may review as an appeal would be the location of a school bus stop, the dismissal or suspension of an employee, boundary exceptions, or the transfer, suspension, or expulsion of a student.

The procedures that the Board follows in reviewing cases on appeal are set forth in *Board Policy 22-0018-000*. The Board conducts some appeals by simply reviewing documents submitted by the parties. In other cases, a panel of the Board will conduct a hearing with witness testimony, the presence of legal counsel for the parties, and an argument. The nature of the process followed by the Board regarding a specific appeal is dictated by the type of case involved. The Board's counsel assists the Board in all appeal cases.

Appendix H contains links to selected Maryland statutes and Board policy relating to Board appeals.

D. Board/Superintendent Relationship

The Board provides oversight of the county's public education system and performs the duties imposed upon it by Maryland law.

The Superintendent is the chief executive officer of the public school system, and it is his/her responsibility to ensure that the laws and regulations pertaining to public education and Board policy are carried out. The Superintendent also has specific duties that he/she is required to carry out pursuant to Maryland law. These duties include the following:

- a. Recommending contracts;
- b. recommending budgets;
- c. recommending staff for appointment; and
- d. recommending curricula to the Board.

To perform his/her various duties and responsibilities, the Superintendent hires professional staff and assistants. The Superintendent assigns these professional staff and assistants various duties and functions. Appendix I contains the link to the HCPS Organizational Chart which reflects the titles and reporting lines relating to the Superintendent's administration.

The Board evaluates the Superintendent in accordance with the provisions contained in the Superintendent's contract relating to his/her evaluation. These evaluations occur on an annual basis. Appendix J contains the link to the Superintendent's Evaluation Plan and Timeline.

III. Governance

A. Introduction

The basic procedural vehicles by which the Board exercises its governing authority with respect to the public schools in the county are Board meetings, the Board committee system, and public engagement.

B. Board Meetings

1. School System Governance Section of Board Policy Manual

The policies contained in the School System Governance section of the Board Policy Manual set forth the procedural framework for meetings of the Board of Education. In accordance with these policies, Board meetings are scheduled as 23 annual meetings, usually on Mondays, with a target of 2 weeks between meetings, accounting for holidays. Special meetings of the Board may also be called by the President of the Board or the Superintendent with the agreement of the Board President. Unless otherwise specified, business meetings of the Board of Education take place at the administrative offices of the Board of Education located at 102 S. Hickory Avenue, Bel Air, Maryland. Public comment is permitted and welcomed at Board business meetings. The specific procedure for comment by the public is found in the Board policy entitled *Public Participation at Board Meetings or Public Hearings*. Appendix K contains a link to the School System Governance section of the Board Policy Manual.

2. Agenda Setting

Various items come before the Board at its meetings. An agenda sets forth such items and the order in which they are considered is prepared for each Board meeting. The President prepares each meeting agenda in advance in consultation with the Superintendent, Vice President, and Board. Any Board member may submit an item for consideration for inclusion on the agenda in writing by email or other means. The Board votes to accept, reject, or modify the agenda of a particular meeting at the

beginning of the meeting.

Typically, several items of Board business for a particular meeting are considered on the consent portion of the meeting's agenda. Board members may request in writing to discuss items on the Consent Agenda or vote to approve it as is. All items on the agenda are considered and acted upon by the Board in accordance with the Board's Rules of Procedure. The President, HCPS staff member, or Board Liaison/administrative assistant provides agendas and related materials to Board of Education members at least four (4) business days in advance of the Board meeting.

Appendix L contains a link to a sample Board agenda.

3. Small Groups

During the week before each regular Board meeting, Board members will meet in small groups to review exhibits and staff information regarding items on the agenda. This is so that Board members can obtain sufficient information to develop their positions and comments during the meeting. HCPS staff members will post the meeting exhibits, reports, briefs, and other information supporting agenda items with a target of 4 business days before each meeting.

Board members may request in writing specific agenda topics to be discussed at the small group meetings.

4. Rules of Procedure

a. Robert's Rules of Order

Pursuant to a regulation issued by the Maryland State Board of Education (MSBE), local Boards of education are to observe the rules generally adopted by deliberative bodies. The Board generally utilizes Robert's Rules of Order as its rules of procedure.

b. Majority/Voting Requirements

MSBE regulations and policy set forth the criteria as to what constitutes a majority for voting purposes. Motions and resolutions to be adopted by the Board must receive the concurrence of a majority of the entire Board. Policy must receive a supermajority of the entire Board to be adopted. The number of Board members who constitute the entire Board varies depending on whether the Student Member is authorized to vote on the matter before the Board and is specified by COMAR.

2. Legal Requirements of Board Meetings

a. Open and Closed Meetings

As discussed above, the Board is a public agency created by Maryland law. As such, the Board is subject to the Open Meetings Act (OMA). The OMA is a Maryland law that requires public bodies such as the Board to conduct its business in public.

Pursuant to the OMA, the Board must transact business in meetings open to the public unless the Board is considering certain matters the OMA expressly authorizes the Board to review and discuss in closed (also known as executive) session. Typical examples of matters which, under the OMA, the Board may consider in closed session are collective bargaining matters; personnel issues relating to specific employees; and consultation with legal counsel.

The OMA also requires the Board to comply with specific procedures such as publishing notice regarding an open or closed meeting; completion of specified forms when a session of the Board is closed; and taking a vote of the Board regarding whether a meeting should be closed. Appendix M contains a link to the OMA.

b. Meeting Minutes/Records

Pursuant to Maryland law and MSBE regulations, The Board administrative assistant (also called Board

Liaison) prepares minutes of both closed and open sessions of the Board meetings. The Board reviews and approves or disapproves the Minutes of meetings at subsequent meetings. This usually occurs at the next meeting following the meeting in question if at all practicable.

Minutes of closed sessions include a record of any votes taken and information about the session topic but do not contain private or confidential information discussed at closed session pursuant to *Section 3-305(b)(1) of the General Provisions Article of the Maryland Code*.

Pursuant to Maryland law, the Superintendent provides the records of the content of any Board resolution, policy, bylaw, or order to the State Superintendent of Schools.

3. Duties of the President/Vice President

a. Election

Pursuant to Maryland law, the Board elects a president and vice president. This election occurs at the first meeting in July every other year. The president and vice president each serve a term of two years. The Board must fill any vacancy in the presidency or vice presidency within 30 days after it occurs.

b. Duties

1) President. The president of the Board functions as the leader and spokesperson for the Board members, and acts as the presiding officer relative to Board meetings. Among the president's duties are the following as a minimum:

- i. Maintain communication with the Superintendent;
- ii. ensure that evaluations of the Superintendent and the Board Administrative Assistant take place on a timely basis ;
- iii. facilitate communication between and among the Superintendent and the Board;

- iv. appoint persons to serve as members on Board committees, including Board and staff members and community volunteer members, and approve Committee Chairs and charters;
- v. delegate duties and assignments to Board members;
- vi. oversee the communication process with the public;
- vii. act as liaison to county, state, and federal governmental agencies and officials in coordination with Board members;
- viii. preside at all Board meetings;
- ix. participate with the Superintendent in preparing agendas; and
- x. act as liaison with Board Counsel.

The above list is illustrative and not exhaustive.

- 2) Vice President. The vice president performs the above functions in the absence of the president as well as the following duties:
 - i. Leads the Pledge of Allegiance; and
 - ii. performs meeting leadership and other duties as assigned by the president.
- 3) Members. Members attend Board meetings, support the Board in service on assigned committees, and communicate with other Board members in accordance with this Handbook. Members may request information from the HCPS staff through the Board president and the Board Liaison.
- 4) Student Member of the Board (SMOB). The SMOB has the same responsibility and role as the Board members, with the following exceptions:
 - i. Vote on budget, personnel, legal, or curriculum-related matters;
 - ii. attend closed Board meetings in which personnel, legal, or budget matters are being discussed; and
 - iii. participate in the Board appeals process.
- 5) Superintendent. Pursuant to Maryland law, the Superintendent serves as the secretary and

treasurer of the Board. In this role, the Superintendent is responsible for maintaining accurate records of Board of Education meetings, acting as presiding officer when the president and vice president are elected, and otherwise ensuring the proper administration of Board business.

- 6) Board Liaison/Administrative Assistant. Duties include:
 - i. Attend all Board meetings;
 - ii. administer attendee role call;
 - iii. maintain minutes of all Board public meetings;
 - iv. support Board members in their duties as Board members;
 - v. manages communication with Board members and staff; and
 - vi. maintain Board Docs site with updated information regarding Committee meetings schedules, minutes, and members.

- 7) Board Legal Counsel attends all Board meetings and provides legal guidance on issues arising during a meeting and other topics.

The Board supports HCPS by aligning actions with the school year and financial requirements based on the annual cycle calendar. The table below provides a guide to the annual cycle of Board actions and meeting topics related to the school year and fiscal requirements.

HCPSBOE ANNUAL TOPICS			Target months for Key Focus areas over school year										
	July	August	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	
Committees	Charge purpose, assign chair, members, reports		Schedule Committee reports throughout year									Review Committee nominees, charges	
Calendar	Obtain MSDE approval for asynchronous days	Calendar Committee meetings				Approve next school year calendar							
Budget	Initiate planning; End year Finance Report			CIP budget; Qtrly Finance Report	CIP budget vote		Operating budget; Qtrly Finance Report	Operating budget vote		Qtrly Finance Report	Transfers between State categories		
Strategic Plan									Executive Session to establish priorities	Subgroup work sessions to draft Plan	Executive Session to review Plan	Approve Strategic Plan for next year	
Superintendent Evaluation	Final Evaluation Plan and goals for next year						Mid Year Review					End Year Review; Update Eval Plan, goals for next year	
Policy		Schedule policies to be reworked in priority order within Policy Review Committee											

Figure 2. Annual Cycle of Board Activities.

C. Board Committees.

The Board establishes committees to advise and support its work. A Committee Charter for Board Committees is provided in Appendix D. Every two years, the Board will update the charge to each Committee and add these links to Appendix D to include the Chair, members, and products and expectations for that year to align Committee efforts with the Board Strategic Plan.

1. Citizen Advisory Committees

Pursuant to Maryland law, the Board has the authority to establish citizen committees that advise the Board regarding the activities and programs in the public school system. These committees include parents, teachers, students, other citizens, and BOE members.

See Policy Number *10-0002-000, Harford County Board of Education Citizen Advisory Committees*, amended 4/21/23.

The following Citizen Advisory Committees, or CACs, are established by the Board.

- a. Career & Technical Education Committee
- b. Family Life Committee
- c. Gifted & Talented Committee
- d. Safety & Security Committee
- e. Special Education Committee

2. Standing Board Committees

The Board may establish standing committees to assist it in carrying out its duties. The following Board standing committees are authorized.

- a. Audit Committee
- b. Budget Committee
- c. Calendar Review Committee
- d. Curriculum Review Committee
- e. Policy Review Committee
- f. Strategic Planning Committee
- g. Superintendent Evaluation Committee
- h. Legislative Committee
- i. Student Government Committee

Appendix D will contain links to the annually updated charges or specific charters of the standing committees that supplement the overarching Committee Charter in Appendix D.

3. Ad Hoc Committees

From time to time, the Board may establish temporary or ad hoc committees with the President directing the purpose, deliverables, scope, timeframe, membership, chair, and reporting requirements in coordination with the Board members and using the guidance in Appendix D.

D. Public Engagement

Another method by which the Board executes its responsibilities is by engaging the public in dialogue. Board members appear, participate, and speak at various meetings sponsored by community, educational, or civic organizations. Involvement in such public dialogue provides Board members with the opportunity to convey the Board's goals, mission, vision, and performance to all persons concerned about public education in the county.

Board members may also serve on external committees established by governmental agencies or civic groups concerned with matters related to public education. Board members are encouraged to provide external parties with information related to the Board's approved actions, policies, and decisions consistent with the ethics rules.

E. Key Work of School Boards

In addition to its mission and vision, statements and policies, and the mandatory duties that are defined in law, the Board is committed to "The Key Work of School Boards," a framework for planning and acting based on systems thinking. Developed in 2000 and updated in 2020 by the National School Boards Association, "The Key Work of School Boards" encompasses the following eight essential areas upon which the Board focuses.

Vision

Engaging in a comprehensive planning process to establish a clear vision of student achievement as the top priority of the school Board, staff, and community.

Standards

Setting clear standards for student performance.

Assessment

Establishing an assessment process that measures success at regular intervals.

Accountability

Establishing a strong accountability process.

Alignment

Aligning resources to focus on students meeting the standards.

Climate

Creating a positive climate for student and staff success.

Collaboration and Community Engagement

Building collaborative relationships with political and business leaders, with a focus on developing a consensus for student achievement as a top community priority.

Continuous Improvement

Committing to continuous improvement for student achievement

IV. Board Organization and Membership

A. Membership

1. Hybrid Board

The Board consists of nine citizen members and one student member. Six of the citizen Board members are elected for four-year terms, one from each of the six councilmanic districts in the County, and three are appointed by the Harford County Executive and will serve a term of at least two years.

Appendix N contains a link to Subtitle 6A of Title 3 of the Education Article which is the law which established the hybrid Board of Education.

2. Qualification for Membership

Pursuant to Maryland law, members of the Board of Education must meet certain qualification requirements. If a member does not meet these requirements, he/she may be disqualified from the Board of Education.

These requirements are as follows:

- a. Board members may not be subject to the authority of the Board, i.e., he/she cannot be an employee of the HCPS or provide independent Contractor services to the Board.
- b. Board members must be registered voters of Harford County.
- c. Elected Board members must be residents of the councilmanic district he/she represents.

Appendix N contains a link to Subtitle 6A of Title 3 of the Education Article which contains the qualification requirements pertaining to Board of Education members.

3. Student Member

The Board has a student member. The student member is either an 11th or 12th grader attending a Harford County public school and is selected by the Harford County Regional Association of Student Councils (HCRASC) of HCPS students. He or she may vote on certain matters as specified in the law, including policy, and may express a preferential vote in other matters. The student member of the Board is a voice to represent HCPS students. Appendix N contains a link to Subtitle 6A of Title 3 of the Education Article, which contains the provisions of law pertaining to the Student Member.

B. Requirements of Members

1. Ethics/Financial Disclosure

Pursuant to Maryland law, Board members and all other Board employees are subject to the Board's Ethics Policy. Pursuant to and as required by Maryland law, the Board has adopted an Ethics policy which sets forth specific regulations regarding conflicts of interest. Board members and employees are subject to these rules. Additionally, Board members and certain specified Board employees, such as the Superintendent and his executive assistants, are required to file, on an annual basis, financial disclosure reports which set forth any financial relationship between the Board member and the school system.

The Board Ethics Panel enforces and interprets the Board Ethics Policy. This panel consists of five citizens of Harford County selected by the Board of Education. The panel reviews the financial

disclosures as appropriate, investigates complaints alleging violation of the Ethics Policy and provides, as requested, advisory opinions which interpret provisions of the Ethics Policy. The General Counsel serves as the liaison between the Board and the Ethics Panel.

Board member's knowledge of and compliance with the Board Ethics Policy is of utmost importance. Appendix O contains a link to the *Board Ethics Policy*.

2. Attendance at Meeting

Board members are expected to attend as many Board meetings or appeal hearings as practicable. Failure to attend at least 75 percent of Board of Education meetings without good cause serves as a basis for removal of a Board of Education member.

3. Board Code of Conduct

The Board of Education maintains a policy entitled Board Code of Conduct. This policy sets forth the requirements relating to the way Board members conduct themselves. Among the provisions of the Code of Conduct policy are those pertaining to confidentiality, deference to Board decisions, proper relationship with the Superintendent and staff and respect for fellow Board members. Adherence to this Code of Conduct policy requirement is essential to allow the Board to carry out its duties effectively and lawfully.

Appendix P links to the Board of Education Code of Conduct policy.

C. Board Member Orientation/Training/Leadership Development

All Board of Education members are expected to participate in a reasonable amount of orientation, training, and leadership development activities. The Board of Education is a member in two organizations which provide extensive services with respect to such activities.

These organizations are the Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) and the National School Boards Association (NSBA). MABE's membership consists of all 24 public school systems in Maryland. It provides regular seminars and training activities for new and veteran Board members. MABE also hosts an annual conference for Board members and staff of all the Maryland school systems. This conference typically occurs in the fall of each

year, September or October.

Board members may also serve as members of MABE committees or educational organizations.

NSBA's membership consists of public school systems throughout the country. It also provides seminars, training activities and information for Board members and staff as well as a national conference which typically occurs in early April.

The Board of Education pays from its operating budget the costs of registration, travel, lodging, and other expenses relating to the attendance of Board members at Board member orientation training or leadership development conferences or meetings. These are separate costs from the honorarium.

Appendix Q contains links to both the NSBA and MABE websites.

D. Expenses and Reimbursement of Board Members

Pursuant to Maryland law, Board of Education members are entitled to be reimbursed \$300.00 monthly as an honorarium. The HCPS Office of Finance issues a payment of \$300.00 every month to each Board member. The Finance Office also issues a US Internal Revenue Service Form 1099 to Board members, reflecting a total yearly payment of \$3,600 to each Board member. If a Board member incurs expenses that exceed the honorarium, the Board member may be reimbursed for such expenses if the Board of Education approves such reimbursement.

Appendix T contains a link to Section 3-6A-04 of the Education Article entitled *Travel and Other Expenses for Members of the Board of Education*.

E. Removal of Board Member

Pursuant to Maryland law, Board members may be removed from office by the MSBE for specified and limited reasons:

- 1) Immorality;
- 2) misconduct in office;
- 3) incompetency;
- 4) willful neglect of duty; and
- 5) failure to attend without good cause at least 75 percent of the scheduled open business meetings of the Board of Education

in any one calendar year.

The MSBE is required to provide an opportunity for a hearing regarding the charges against a member before making a decision to remove him or her. A member removed has the right to a *de novo* review of the removal by the Circuit Court for Harford County.

Appendix S contains a link to Section 3-6A-02 of the Education Article entitled "Removal of Board Member."

The Harford County Council appoints a qualified individual to fill any vacancy of an elected member on the county Board for the remainder of the term and until a successor is elected and qualifies.

The Harford County Executive appoints a qualified individual to fill any vacancy of an appointed member of the county Board for the remainder of the term and until a permanent successor is appointed and qualifies.

V. Operating Procedures and Protocols

A. Communications

1. Maryland Public Information Act MPIA

Board written communications are subject to the *Maryland Public Information Act* (MPIA). The MPIA is a Maryland law that permits persons to review and photocopy documents in the custody and control of a Maryland public agency, subject to a number of exceptions. As discussed above, the Board is a Maryland public agency. Under the MPIA, a document means most materials that are written or electronic records, including computer files and emails.

As mentioned above, some types of documents are exempt from review or photocopying under the MPIA. Examples of these exempt document types are attorney/client communications, student records, and personnel records. Board members should, however, consider all communication they write as potentially subject to review under the MPIA since determining whether a particular document or even a portion of a document is exempt from disclosure under the MPIA can be a complex legal issue. Appendix T contains a link to the MPIA.

2. Standards for Board Communication

All Board communications, whether oral or written, should comport with the standards and requirements of the Board Code of Conduct. All Board written communication, whether in the form of a conventional letter or email should be considered formal business correspondence that will be subject to public review. By communicating in a business-like way, Board members act consistent with the *Board Code of Conduct*, the MPIA, and the standard of decorum consonant with public office.

B. Intra-Board Communication

Board members may communicate in writing between and among themselves regarding administrative or operational matters such as attendance at a meeting, location of a meeting or use of the Board computer network. Board members may not communicate in writing between and among themselves regarding a matter that concerns public business, such as the adoption of a policy, adoption of a budget, or approval of a contract.

Outside of Board meetings or social settings where the topics do not relate to Board business matters, Board members may communicate with each other verbally, provided a quorum or more Board members are not present for such communication. Board members may communicate with each other in writing, including email and other electronic means, provided a quorum or more of Board members do not participate in a contemporaneous, back-and-forth exchange of such written communications.

C. Board/Superintendent Communication

All written communications between Board members and the Superintendent should be copied to all other Board members. Verbal communications may occur between individual Board members and the Superintendent. However, no such communication should have the purpose of excluding any other Board member from having knowledge about the communication in question.

The Office of Communications issues specific regular communications via email newsletter, "Board of Ed Weekly Update," to keep the Board informed regarding school system events and business. This email update summarizes HCPS events that occurred during the prior week and provides information

about other matters that are significant to HCPS. The Superintendent also provides a weekly DashBoard status report on the overall HCPS.

D. Board/Staff Communication

All Board members' written communication to staff should be done with the knowledge of the Superintendent and Board President. All written communication between Board members and staff should be copied to the Superintendent and Board President. This communication shall comply with the OMA and not be used for contemporaneous discussion or development of positions while involving a quorum of Board members.

When serving on a committee, Board members can freely communicate with staff members who serve on that committee.

The Board President is authorized to communicate directly with the General Counsel so that he/she can provide effective legal advice to the Board. The General Counsel provides a quarterly report to Board members, the Superintendent, and other staff that provides information as to the status of any litigation in which the Board or school system may be involved.

E. Board Communication with Public

Board members' communication with the public is of critical importance. Board members may be approached individually by citizens who wish to discuss, either in writing or orally, general Board business such as the budget, a policy, or curriculum. In instances where a Board member is speaking about general Board matters that have been discussed and acted upon publicly, the Board member may discuss those aspects of the matter which are of public record and the Board's position regarding the matter. The Board member may express his/her position regarding a particular vote or matter, but shall also affirm that the Board, as a whole, has the final authority to make decisions regarding the matter at issue.

If a person makes an inquiry to a Board member about a matter which is specific in nature and is not a matter of public record such as, for example, the suspension of his/her child from school, an employee's performance, or the location of a bus stop, the Board member should not comment on the matter other than to help them understand the appeals process. There are two basic reasons for this rule. First, complaints regarding specific issues or complaints must first be addressed by the Superintendent and his

staff. Secondly, if after the Superintendent and his staff have addressed the complaint, the complaining person is dissatisfied with the Superintendent's decision regarding the matter, he/she may have a right to appeal the matter to the Board. A Board member who has already discussed the specifics of such a matter with the complaining person may have to recuse themselves from any appeal regarding it because of such prior knowledge or involvement.

HCPS maintains a system for intake and review of feedback and complaints. Persons may complete an electronic contact form stating their concern and send it to the Board Administrative Assistant/Liaison who routes the contact form to the Board members, the Superintendent, and/or the appropriate member of the HCPS staff for a response. All electronic correspondence received will be forwarded to all Board members for review upon receipt and for follow-up if necessary. The HCPS staff member responding to the concern will forward a copy of the response to all Board members.

F. Board Communication with Media

All Board members are responsible for treating members of the media with respect and dignity, just as we would any other community members. The president functions as the leader and spokesperson for the whole Board.

Board members should inform the media that HCPS media requests must go through the Manager of Communications and that Board media requests must go through the President.

As public officials and community leaders, Board members' words and actions reflect on their office, schools, and the entire organization. Students, families, and community members see Board members as role models, and therefore, it is important to be cautious when making public statements, even if they are not directly related to your role with HCPS and the Board.

Clarify when you are speaking as an individual Board member and not on behalf of HCPS or the Board as a whole by clearly stating that you are not speaking on behalf of or representing the Board or HCPS unless the Manager of Communications or the Board President has authorized you to do so.

G. Visiting Schools

Board members are encouraged to visit the schools. If a Board member is visiting the school for the purposes of discussing with the administration or staff at the school matters of policy or operation of the school or evaluating the functioning of the school, the Board member, as a courtesy, should notify the Superintendent and Board President in advance of such visit. If the Board member is visiting the school for the purpose of attending an assembly, a ceremony, or a meeting that is generally open to the public or to participate in an activity with students, the Board member does not need to notify the Superintendent and Board President of such visit.

Board members are required to contact the Board Liaison to arrange school visits at a time convenient to the school staff. During the visit, the Board member should comport himself / herself consistent with the tenets of the Board Code of Conduct.

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APPENDICES

- Appendix A: Resources regarding history of Harford County Public Schools
- See [Our Harford Heritage](#), C. Milton Wright (1967) at Chapter 15
 - See [Decade of Delay: The Desegregation of Harford County Public Schools](#), Patrick P. Spicer, Esquire, Harford Historical Bulletin Numbers 105 & 107 (2007)
 - See [The Colored Schools of Harford County: Separate and Equal?](#) Doug Washburn, Harford Historical Bulletin Numbers 101 & 102 (2005)
- Appendix B: Selected Maryland Statutes regarding legal status of Board
- [Section 3-6A-01 of the Education Article](#)
 - [Section 3-6A-05 of the Education Article](#)
 - [Section 3-102 of the Education Article](#)
 - [Section 3-103 of the Education Article](#)
 - [Section 3-104 of the Education Article](#)
- Appendix C: Link to Board Strategic Plan
- [Board Strategic Plan](#)
- Appendix D: Overarching Board Committee Charter (add links for other charters and charges to each Committee as they are approved and links to Charters for Citizens Advisory Committees). See below after list of Appendices.
- Appendix E: Link to Board Policy Manual
- [Board Policy Manual](#)
- Appendix F: Link to Subtitle 4 and 5 of Title 6 of the Education Article
- [Subtitle 4 and 5 of Title 6](#)
- Appendix G: Links to Selected Maryland Statutes pertaining to the appointment of the Superintendent
- [Section 4-201 of the Education Article](#)
 - [Section 4-202 of the Education Article](#)
- Appendix H: Links to Selected Maryland Statutes and Board Policy regarding Board appeals
- [Section 4-205 of the Education Article](#)
 - [Section 6-202 of the Education Article](#)
 - [Section 7-305 of the Education Article](#)
 - [Board Policy 22-0018-000](#)
- Appendix I: Link to HCPS Organizational Chart
- [HCPS Organizational Information](#)
- Appendix J: Link to Superintendent Evaluation Timeline

[Superintendent Evaluation Timeline 12-20-10](#)

- Appendix K: Link to School System Governance Section of Board Policy Manual
[School System Governance Section](#)
- Appendix L: Link to Sample Board Agenda
[Sample Board Agenda](#)
- Appendix M: Link to Selected Provisions of the Open Meetings Act
[General Provisions Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland Section 3-305\(b\)](#)
- Appendix N: Link to Subtitle 6A of Title 3 of the Education Article
[Subtitle 6A of Title 3 of the Education Article](#)
- Appendix O: Link to Board Ethics Policy
[Ethics Policy](#)
- Appendix P: Link to Board Code of Conduct Policy
[Board Code of Conduct Policy](#)
- Appendix Q: Links to National School Boards Association (NSBA) and Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE)
[National School Boards Association](#)
[Maryland Association of Boards of Education](#)
- Appendix R: Link to Section 3-6A-04
[Section 3-6A-04 of the Education Article](#)
- Appendix S: Link to Section 3-6A-02
[Section 3-6A-02 of the Education Article](#)
- Appendix T: Links to selected provisions of the Maryland Public Information Act (MPIA)
[General Provisions Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland Public Information Act Title 4: Subtitle 1 - Subtitle 6](#)

APPENDIX D.

OVERARCHING CHARTER FOR ALL COMMITTEES

Purpose and Scope: This overarching Charter supports the responsibilities of the Board of Education as stated in the HCPS BOE Member Handbook.

This Charter provides guidance to all Committees operating under the auspices of the Board of Education and is the guiding document for how Committees operate, are chaired, and assign members. This includes Citizen Advisory Committees, Blueprint Committees, and all other Committees that the Harford County Public Schools (HCPS) Board of Education or central office supports.

The standing Board Committees include

- 1) Audit
- 2) Budget
- 3) Calendar
- 4) Curriculum Review
- 5) Legislative
- 6) Policy Review
- 7) Superintendent Evaluation
- 8) Strategic Planning.

Citizens Advisory Committees (CACs) and other committees which the Board sponsors are as follows. See Policy Number 10-0002-000, Harford County Board of Education Citizen Advisory Committees, amended 4/21/23.

- 1) Career & Technical Education
- 2) Family Life
- 3) Gifted & Talented
- 4) Safety & Security
- 5) Special Education
- 6) Judy Center Steering
- 7) School Health
- 8) Customer Service Task Force
- 9) Parent/Community Engagement Work Group (PACE)
- 10) Harford County PTAs Council.

This guidance pertains to any additional or ad hoc committees or work groups as well.

The purpose of the Committees is to assist the Board of Education in its oversight role, to support the BOE Strategic Plan, and also support the HCPS staff in many cases. The Committees develop and provide recommendations to the Board of Education for decisions, along with providing supporting information and rationale to inform the Board

approval votes as needed.

Expected Outcomes/Products

- 1) Timely drafting, review, coordination, and submission of information and decision packages to the Board to facilitate the efficient, transparent, and lawful operation of HCPS.
- 2) Presentations of recommendations and supporting information to the Board at open meetings and pre-meeting Small Groups as scheduled in coordination between the Superintendent and Board President. Supporting information includes but is not limited to applicable statutes, compilations of community and staff inputs received, alternatives and metrics considered and evaluated, and relation to other existing information, curricula, policies, and procedures as applicable to each Committee product and/or Board decision required.

Responsibilities of Committees: The Committees are the mechanism for staff subject matter experts and other input as appropriate to the specific topics in each Committee. The Committees ensure that the information and products provided to the Board are sound, complete, and current. The Committees support the Board to ensure that the implementation of approved recommendations will be consistent with law, BOE priorities, the educational mission of HCPS, and best practices in education. Committees should keep the Board informed regarding issues related to their topics and current community concerns.

Communications process: The Committees will submit recommendations and supporting information to the Superintendent and the Board as applicable to each Board decision required. Each of the Committees will establish protocols for Committee meetings, records, and activities.

- 1) The Board will provide priorities, parameters, requested information, and other inputs for use in the Committees' scheduling, deliberations, and in forming short-term work groups to evaluate alternatives, develop information, and/ or garner educators' input.
- 2) For the Curriculum Review Committee and other applicable Committees, pilot programs, special studies, and sub work groups will require Board approval before initiation. The Committees will provide the Board information regarding the costs, personnel time impacts, and other resources required for pilot and other programs incurring costs, as well as information regarding schedule and expected benefits of the programs.
- 3) After initial Board draft review of Committee information packages, the Committees will track additional inputs and/or comments received and how the comments were adjudicated, particularly in the cases of policies or surveys for which community input is formally sought.
- 4) For the Legislative and other Committees in which representatives attend meetings external to HCPS, such as MABE, or represent positions

otherwise outside HCPS, those positions shall be brought before the Board for approval prior to being conveyed to external organizations or meetings.

- 5) Committees shall plan out their efforts and potential decisions required by the Board (if applicable) so that Board agendas and small group presentations can be planned in advance to support decisions needed. Some Committees, such as CACs, may only need to provide periodic information briefs or reports to the BOE, vice actual decisions.
- 6) The Committee chair or other member designated to record meeting summaries and/or minutes will provide these records and list of attendees for each meeting to the Board liaison for posting on Board Docs site.

Schedules of meetings: Each Committee will develop an annual schedule of meetings. For some Committees, such as the Policy Review and Budget Committees, meetings may be requested by the Board to be monthly or as needed based on Board requests to review or initiate policy/status updates or new inputs.

Expectation of Committee members

- 1) Attend all meetings
- 2) Participate as an active member of the Committee
- 3) Accept and perform assignments
- 4) Board members of each committee are encouraged to inform other Board members regarding committee deliberation and status of tasks

Links with other groups/people. These vary with each Committee but include organizations such as:

- 1) NSBA policy services
- 2) MABE policy service
- 3) Maryland school systems

Chairs and Membership: The Board of Education will appoint Committee Chairs annually before each school year or as needed due to vacancies. The Board of Education will review and confirm or update membership of each Committee annually before each school year.

The Board will coordinate with the Superintendent to identify potential Chair and member candidates. The goal is to appoint the Chair and members at the August meeting for a one-year tenure. Members include representation from the following:

- 1) Board President, Vice President, or designee
- 2) Superintendent or designee
- 3) Board Attorney (primarily for Policy Review, but supports other efforts as applicable)

- 4) Board members; as designated by Board President, potentially the Student Board member. The Budget Committee will have 3 or 4 Board members, and at least two staff members.
- 5) HCPS Leadership Team representative
- 6) HCPS School-based educator representative(s)
- 7) HCRASC student representative

Implementation. This charter will be in effect immediately, including Board approvals of Committee Chairs and members which were not done on the intended schedule.

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