

DRAFT comments February 28th – not presented on behalf of DPAC

I'm Sarah Holland, and I'm here tonight as someone who has been coming to board meetings for quite some time now - over the last several boards. I've seen a lot of meetings, but last one was memorable. I have some comments and a couple of suggestions.

First off, good news - if you were all agree on everything, then some of you would be surplus to requirements, and something would be wrong. It is good that you disagree on some items, and that you disagree in public, as otherwise that would be a sign of dysfunction. One can have disagreement with respect and with trust. Respect each other and trust in the process, to get those very necessary clashing viewpoints and challenging questions.

All, however, must have the same viewpoint on one thing - the importance of education to our students. We are all here for our students.

My first suggestion then, is related to that. I would like you to remove the pictures of prior boards from this wall. Having them in your vision may make you think that this is about the importance of the board. This is about the importance of the board's work as trustees of public education - entrusted with both the public's money and the public's children. Please have pictures of students up instead, both to remind you of why you are here, and also, to help moderate your tone at times. Children may listen.

Speaking of tone, another suggestion - "challenge the chair" is not the correct procedure. You may wish to refresh your memory by referring to pages 255 to 260. Using the phrase "challenge the Chair" appears to negatively focus the issue on the chair as a person. The correct phrase is to "appeal from the decision of the Chair". It is the decision, and not the person, that is subject to an appeal, recognizing that it is the group as a whole that has the ability to make that decision. It's not just semantics, it is the philosophy behind those words.

There was a reference that last meeting to decisions that were made in camera because there wasn't an appropriately timed public board meeting. If you are making decisions in camera due to emergent issues,

you then should make the decision and the deliberations public. Looking at page 13, there seems to be a number of items that could be made public. It reminds me of new slogan of the Washington Post newspaper - Democracy Dies in the Dark. It applies here too - you are a democratically elected public board, you cannot keep people in the dark about your decisions, deliberation, data, and votes, simply because it is more convenient for you.

Which leads us to the decision on waiving your policy. What I took away from the board meeting is yes, you do seem to get the impression that maybe waiving things isn't the best idea ever, and yes, you do say that you value your partners and public input. More importantly, however, a majority of the board values not talking about these policies any more – or, more accurately, the issue that you disagree about that is somehow embedded in those policies.

It remains publicly vague what the actual issue is. I was at the policy and governance committee meeting that I believe was referred to last meeting, and my recollection differs - there was obviously some sort of disagreement going on, not being referred to in front of partner groups. It was like watching a couple fight about their marriage in front of you - very uncomfortable, and it was suggested that the fight / discussion take place elsewhere. At no time, was it said oh hey, if this ever turns into a new policy, we don't even want you to ask for input from the public.

Finally, "waive" has no actual meaning in Roberts Rules of Order, your bylaws, or the school act. If you are ever tempted to use WAIVE again in a motion, please substitute the word IGNORE for it, because it has the same meaning and may possibly help you realize what it is you are doing.

If you as a board ignore or do not value your own policies, you cannot expect others to follow or value them.

Thank you for your time. I'll mention I'm going to be leaving again before the last stroke of midnight falls. Let's hope that's the case for all of us tonight.