

**MEDFIELD SCHOOL COMMITTEE**  
**Regular Meeting before Annual Town Meeting**  
**May 1, 2023 - 6:00 pm**  
**Medfield High School Room 119**

**PRESENT:** Timothy Knight - Chair (attended remotely)  
Michelle Kirkby - Vice Chair  
Leo Brehm - Recording Secretary  
Will Horne - Financial Secretary  
Kristin Simonini - Member at Large

**ALSO PRESENT:** Dr. Jeffrey Marsden - Superintendent of Schools  
Michael LaFrancesca - Director of Finance and Operations  
Andrea Moores - Secretary

The meeting was called to order at 6:05 pm by the Chair and a Roll Call was taken:

- Michelle Kirkby - present
- Kristin Simonini - present
- Will Horne - present
- Timothy Knight - present (via Zoom)

Mr. Leo Brehm was not present at the time of the Roll Call and arrived at 6:10 pm.

**PUBLIC INPUT**

There was no public input at this time.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**General discussion around the FY24 Budget and/or any Annual Town Meeting Articles that impact the Medfield Public Schools or Medfield School Committee - presented by Mr. Timothy Knight**

Mr. Knight asked Dr. Marsden and Mr. LaFrancesca if any changes have been made to the FY24 Budget that the Committee has voted on. Dr. Marsden stated that no changes have been made to the FY24 Budget. Mr. Knight confirmed that Mr. LaFrancesca and Ms. Kirkby are prepared to address any questions from the floor related to the FY24 Budget.

The Committee engaged in a conversation regarding the Annual Town Meeting Article 28. Mr. Knight explained that Warrant Article 28 was previously discussed at their April 13th meeting. Ms. Simonini and Mr. Knight attended the Warrant Committee meeting on April 25th and responded to questions from the Warrant Committee. At that meeting the Warrant Committee voted unanimously to dismiss Article 28. Mr. Knight explained that once the Warrant Committee dismisses a citizen's petition the Committee reaches out to the sponsor of the petition to see if they would like to still bring forth the petition or amend the petition. The Town Moderator informed Mr. Knight that the petition can be adjusted from the floor of the Annual Town Meeting but that the revision could not be dramatically changed from the initial citizen's petition. Mr. Knight stated that he did not have clarity because it is up to the sponsor to determine what will happen. Mr. Knight stated that the Town Moderator shared potential revised language with Mr. Knight and wanted to know if it would change the position of the School Committee.

Mr. Brehm asked a clarifying question to Mr. Knight and asked if the Town Moderator asked Mr. Knight specifically if the revised language would change the School Committee's position on Article 28. Ms.

Kirkby asked if the School Committee had an official updated amended version of Article 28. Mr. Brehm expressed his concern that the Town Moderator would ask how the Committee felt without having the opportunity to deliberate. Mr. Knight explained that his conversation with the Town Moderator was to help him understand the process when amendments are made from the floor.

Mr. Knight explained if the petition was to change, according to the Town Charter it would need to be filed six months prior. Since the petition wasn't it did not follow due process and could be considered out of order. The legal opinion indicated that the petition would not be approved by the Attorney General's office due to the way it was written. The petition could still be brought forward but it would not be enforceable according to the attorney for the Town. Mr. Knight shared that the Town Moderator asked him if the Committee would consider the concept of reviewing their policies BEDH and BEE and look more closely at the number of signatures warranted on citizen's petition to hold a hearing if a non-binding petition was approved.

Mr. Brehm expressed his feelings that if this citizen's petition was approved it should apply to all town committees and that this should be stated publicly at Town Meeting since it is written to single out the School Committee.

Ms. Kirkby explained the process at Town Meeting for Article 28.

Ms. Simonini asked if any members of the public joined the meeting via Zoom. There were no remote participants at this time. Ms. Simonini stated that if there are changes made to the petition from the floor the participating committee's would not be able to make a decision at that moment and need time to review the changes. Ms. Simonini also stated that the number of signatures needed was not the only issue with Warrant Article 28.

Mr. Knight stated that he spoke with the Town Moderator yesterday who told him that the language that he discusses with the sponsor of Warrant Article 28 is now a non-binding resolution which is no longer out of order but very direct in asking the School Committee to amend its public participation Policy BEDH and public hearing Policy BEE to allow for a special number of School Committee members as it deems appropriate to request a hearing on an issue within School Committee purview. Mr. Knight explained that this non-binding resolution does specifically ask the School Committee to change its policy.

Dr. Marsden stated for the record that today's memo to the School Committee highlighted all of the times that Policy BEDH has been on the School Committee meeting agenda. Public comment has been taken numerous times beginning in November 2023 and ending with a School Committee vote on January 26, 2023. Dr. Marsden referenced Policy BEDH- E Guidelines for Public Comment. He explained to the Committee that within Policy BEDH-E it states that if the Committee believes an issue requires a dialogue with the school district community, the Committee may schedule a separate public hearing on that issue. Since this is already explicitly stated in the policy it is unclear why the petition is needed.

Ms. Simonini stated that there is not much the Committee can do as a whole except speak out as citizens at the meeting. Ms. Kirkby will read the School Committee's statement in response to the original

Warrant Article 28 but the Committee can not speak to the revised non-binding resolution because it hasn't been shared with them and they were unable to deliberate.

Mr. Knight asked for clarification on Policy BEDH-E and Dr. Marsden reiterated that the policy includes a provision for the School Committee to hold a public forum on a topic if deemed necessary.

Mr. Brehm stated that it is not clear what the non-binding resolution would do.

Ms. Kirkby shared her belief that the non-binding resolution would create more confusion and chaos.

Mr. La Francesca explained that the Committee is not required to act on a non-binding resolution.

Ms. Simonini asked if the Committee has evidence of a request formally being made to the Committee to add an item to a meeting agenda that was declined. Ms. Kirkby explained that the petition was for a public hearing not an agenda item. Ms. Simonini explained that the petitioner has said that they have requested things be added to meeting agendas and those requests have not been honored.

Mr. Knight stated that that may in fact be the driver for the petition but the School Committee engaged in a thorough review process of Policy BEDH, and the essence of the petition undermines the authority of the School Committee.

Mr. Brehm explained the structure of the past public forms that the School Committee has held for the new Committee members. He also explained that the changes made to Policy BEDH were designed to help the Committee run more effective and efficient meetings.

Mr. Knight explained that public input can be a driver for agenda items depending on the topic and meetings have been adjusted to accommodate public comment during meetings.

Mr. Horne stated that he hasn't been on the Committee long enough to have all the information on this topic but at the end of the day the School Committee Policy allows the Committee to hold a public forum/hearing if warranted especially if there are community conversations creating division within the community. Mr. Horne shared his belief that the Warrant Article 28 removes power from the School Committee and he does not support the article.

Mr. Knight stated that if the amended motion on Article 28 refers to Policy BEDH the sponsor of the article had raised several things during public input which the Committee considered and made adjustments to the policy. He was in agreement with Mr. Horne that the petition binding or non-binding would negatively impact the School Committee ability to carry out their duties.

Mr. Knight concluded that based on the Committee's discussion on the Warrant Article 28 at the April 13th meeting and this evening's meeting the Committee is still in agreement that they do not support the Warrant Article 28. Ms. Kirkby will be the spokesperson for the Committee at the Annual Town Meeting. School Committee members are welcome to speak as community members.

Ms. Simonini asked for clarification for this particular meeting which is different from regular meetings. The Committee explained that the meeting prior to Annual Town Meeting is always held for items directly related to the Annual Town Meeting and is not a full School Committee meeting.

A motion was made by Mr. Brehm, seconded by Ms. Kirkby to adjourn the meeting:

A Roll Call Vote was take to adjourn the meeting:

- Michelle Kirkby - yes
- Leo Brehm - yes
- Kristin Simonini - yes
- Will Horne - yes
- Timothy Knight - yes

The meeting was adjourned at 6:38 pm.

**Next Meeting - May 18, 2023**

#### **EXHIBITS AND DOCUMENTS**

- Warrant Article 28 - Citizens Petition
- Opinion on citizens' petition for School Committee Public Hearings
- Memo to the School Committee on Policy BEDH - May 1, 2023
- Policy BEDH- Public Comment at School Committee Meetings
- Policy BEDH-E - Guidelines for Public Comment
- Policy BEE - Special Procedures for Conducting Hearings

Respectfully submitted,  
Andrea Moores  
Secretary

**Minutes Approved by School Committee: May 13, 2023**