
Westerly Public Schools

Westerly School Committee By-Laws

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ARTICLE I. ORGANIZATION

SECTION 1. ORGANIZATION

The organizational meeting of the Westerly School Committee will take place at the first meeting of the School Committee on School Committee election years following certification of the election and the swearing in of new School Committee members.

SECTION 2. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The Committee Chair, Vice-Chair and Clerk will be elected at the organizational meeting, referred to in Section 1, or at such time as either or both offices shall become vacant. The Chair or the Vice-Chair in the Chair's absence or the Clerk, if both the Chair and Vice-Chair are absent, will preside over the election of offices. The position of Chair will be elected first followed by the Vice-Chair and Clerk. A majority of the full committee (4 votes) will be required to elect. The election is for a period of two (2) years from biennial meeting to biennial meeting.

If the office of Chair becomes vacant, the Vice-Chair shall assume the duties of the Chair until a new Chair is elected.

In the event that the Chair, Vice-Chair and/or Clerk resign as a member of the Committee, the election of a new Chair, Vice-Chair and/or Clerk will take place after the resignation has been formally accepted by the Committee and replacement member (s) have been appointed by the Town Council.

If the Vice-Chair and/or office of Clerk becomes vacant, the Committee Chair will appoint a temporary Vice-Chair and/or Clerk from the committee membership until the former Vice-Chair and/or Clerk's resignation has been formally accepted by the Committee and then the Committee will elect a new Vice-Chair and/or Clerk once the replacement is certified.

ARTICLE II. MEETINGS

SECTION 1. REGULAR MEETINGS

The regular monthly meetings of the Westerly School Committee will be held on the first and third Wednesday of each month at a time to be fixed and determined by the committee. The meeting date as well as the time and place may be changed, postponed or canceled by a majority vote of the Committee.

SECTION 2. SPECIAL MEETINGS/EMERGENCY MEETINGS

Special meetings may be called by the Chair or upon the written request of any four (4) members. This notice shall be made to the Clerk or the Superintendent. The notice shall state the special matter or matters to be considered and provided that all members receive notice forty-eight (48) hours prior to the meeting. At such meetings only the business for which the meeting was called will be in order.

Emergency meetings may be called by the Chair and approved by a majority of the members when the meeting is deemed necessary and where the public welfare so requires. In such a case the meeting notice and agenda will be posted as soon as possible (RIGL § 42-46-6).

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SECTION 3. CLOSED MEETINGS

By a majority vote at an open meeting (RIGL § 42-46-4), the Westerly School Committee may call a closed meeting as specified by the Rhode Island Open Meetings Act (RIGL § 42-46-5).

The reason for closing a meeting to Executive Session and the vote of each member on a motion to convene in Closed Session must be recorded in the Open Meeting Minutes.

SECTION 4. POSTING OF MEETINGS

Written notice of the dates, times and places of regularly scheduled meetings shall be established at the beginning of each calendar year. As specified by the Rhode Island Open Meetings Act (RIGL § 42-46-6), public notice of the agenda will be made available at least forty-eight (48) hours before scheduled meeting (<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/TITLE42/42-46/42-46-6.HTM>). Notice of meetings and agenda shall be posted on the website of Westerly Public Schools and filed electronically with the Office of Rhode Island Secretary of the State.

SECTION 5. QUORUM/CONDUCT OF MEETINGS

A majority (4) of the committee will constitute a quorum. In the absence of the Chair, Vice-Chair and Clerk a temporary Chair shall be elected. In the absence of a quorum the only business allowed is to take measures to obtain a quorum or adjourn.

All meetings will be conducted according to the latest version of Robert's Rules of Order.

SECTION 6. WORKSHOPS

Workshops may be scheduled from time to time in accordance with Rhode Island Open Meeting Law (RIGL § 42-46). Following each election or as necessary, there will be a workshop to review by-laws and revise as necessary.

ARTICLE III. DUTIES OF OFFICERS

SECTION 1. CHAIR

The Chair shall exercise such powers and perform such duties as are fixed by statute (RIGL § 16-2-6). The Chair will assist in the preparation of agenda, maintain order and see that debates and discussion remain relevant and to the issue.

Both the Chair and the Clerk will be the authorized signatories to all legal documents. Grants that require School Committee Chair signature will be reviewed and approved by School Committee before grant applications are signed.

The Chair will have the right to entertain motions and to vote on all matters.

The Chair may be removed from the position of the Chair office at the pleasure of the Westerly School Committee upon a majority vote of the Committee.

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SECTION 2. Vice-Chair

The Vice-Chair may be removed from the position of Vice-Chair office at the pleasure of the Westerly School Committee upon a majority vote of the Committee.

SECTION 3. CLERK

The Clerk shall serve, along with the Chair, as an official signatory of the district and shall certify copies of official district documents as necessary and/or required by RI General Laws.

A non-union administrative secretary under the direction of the Clerk will keep a complete and accurate record of all meetings (RIGL § 16-2-6). The Open Meeting Law (RIGL § 42-46-7) lists what items must be included.

Minutes of open session meetings shall be posted on the Westerly Public Schools website.

Unofficial minutes will be reviewed by the Chair and/or Clerk as to accuracy prior to the approval of the Committee. The Clerk will sign all approved minutes for the Committee prior to their assignment to the permanent record.

The Clerk may be removed from the position of the Clerk office at the pleasure of the Westerly School Committee upon a majority vote of the Committee.

ARTICLE IV. ORDER OF MEETINGS

All School Committee meeting agendas will include two (2) Open Forums (beginning and end of meeting) to allow the community the opportunity to address the committee during the Open Forums. Comments at the first open forum will be limited to agenda items only. The time limit will be no longer than five (5) minutes for each speaker. Speakers may return for one (1) additional five (5) minute time limit once all others who wish to speak have been heard. Time cannot be yielded from one speaker to another. Communications sent to the School Committee will be noted during correspondence.

ARTICLE V. COMMITTEE MEMBER DEVELOPMENT

SECTION 1. NEW MEMBERS

The Westerly School Committee (WSC) and its administrative staff shall assist the members-elect to understand WSC's and Westerly Public Schools' (WPS) functions, policies, and procedures, before and when the members-elect take office.

The members-elect shall be invited to meet with the WPS superintendent and the WSC chair and its available members, to discuss the roles and responsibilities of the district administration and the services the administrative staff performs for the WSC. The members-elect shall be brought up to date with regard to current initiatives and matters of concern. The members-elect will be provided with selected materials and experiences related to WSC membership, including:

- Title 16 Laws of the State of Rhode Island
- Rhode Island Special Education Regulations
- WSC By-laws
- WPS Accelerated Improvement Plan
- School-Based Improvement Plan from each district school

- WPS Superintendent's Goals
- WPS Policy Manual
- Contracts
- Capital and Operating Budgets (current and three years proceeding of actuals and audits)
- Tour of all Westerly Public Schools' Facilities

SECTION 2. MEMBERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

To be accomplished and consistent with Rhode Island's Open Meeting Laws, each member will annually undertake a minimum of six (6) hours of professional development as set forth and described in RIGL § 16-2-5.1

ARTICLE VI. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

School Committee members are expected to understand and comply with the language and spirit of the Rhode Island Code of Ethics and Government Act (RIGL § 36-14).

ARTICLE VII. POLICY

SECTION 1. FORMULATION OF POLICIES

The study, review and evaluation of reports concerning the adoption and execution of its written policies will constitute the basic method by which the School Committee shall exercise its control over the operation of the school system (RIGL § 16-2-32).

The adoption of all policies shall be recorded in the minutes of the School Committee meetings and placed in the Official Westerly School Committee Policy Manual and available online. Only those written statements so adopted and so recorded will be regarded as official School Committee Policy.

SECTION 2. ADOPTION OF POLICIES

Please refer to Policy # 1041, entitled Adoption/Revision of School Committee Policies

ARTICLE VIII. AGENDA

SECTION 1. DEVELOPING THE AGENDA

It will be the duty of the Chair, in cooperation with the Superintendent, to prepare the agenda for all meetings of the Westerly School Committee.

An individual School Committee member may request in writing to the Chair that an item be placed on the agenda. Such a request shall not be unreasonably denied. If such a request is refused, the member may direct that the item request be placed on the agenda under new business for consideration. Future agenda item requests will be accommodated within two to three (2-3) agendas.

All supportive materials will be attached to the agenda and distributed to School Committee members by the Friday prior to the regular Wednesday meeting, forty-eight (48) hours prior to special meetings and as soon as practicable for emergency meetings. Exception to this procedure requires acceptable rationale to the Committee.

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No item shall be acted upon at any meeting of the School Committee unless it had been placed on the distributed and posted agenda according to RIGL § 42-46-6.

ARTICLE IX. SUB-COMMITTEES/LIAISONS/ADVISORY COMMITTEES

The Committee may from time to time establish sub-committees/liaisons/advisory committees to assist in the completion of its business and serve as representatives of the committee on approved advisory committees and boards. Committee members will make nominations that will be voted upon. School Committee members may also serve in such positions, no more than two (2) may serve on any sub-committee or advisory committee. An alternate member may be appointed to any sub-committee or advisory committee.

All such appointed groups /individuals shall be given a written charge, including, but not limited to a statement of the problem or concern initiating the sub-committee, instructions, desired investigations, dates for progress reports to the Westerly School Committee and a termination date of service.

Sub-committees and advisory committees shall elect their own officers and schedule their own meetings at times and locations. The operation of all sub-committees and advisory councils must meet all applicable state regulations and laws. Reports of all sub-committees are advisory to the School Committee.

The Superintendent shall appoint an administrative support person to all such sub-committees to assist in meeting arrangements, informational gathering and report writing. Such support persons are not to be considered a member of the sub-committee or advisory committees, nor are they to be held responsible for advisory outcomes of the sub-committee.

All sub-committees, liaisons and advisory committees may be dissolved or terminated at any regular or special meetings of the School Committee.

Adopted: February 13, 2019
Updated: May 26, 2021
Updated: September 23, 2021
Updated: March 16, 2022