

From: **H. Alan Seibert** <ASeibert@rcps.info>

Date: Fri, Sep 1, 2023 at 9:12 AM

Subject: Suggestion from Roanoke City Public Schools' Board re: Fully Online Board Committee Meetings - Please Modernize

To: foiacouncil@dls.virginia.gov <foiacouncil@dls.virginia.gov>

Dear FOIA Council,

Thank you for this opportunity to share a suggestion/recommendation on behalf of the Roanoke City School Board and Superintendent Dr. Verletta White.

The Roanoke City School Board is in the process of developing legislative priorities and positions for the 2024 General Assembly. Most involve acute issues like school safety, funding, and the teacher shortage, but RCPS also seeks to contribute to continuous improvement efforts in other areas, including a suggestion regarding the unnecessarily restrictive requirements governing Board Committee Meetings.

Accordingly, we appreciate this opportunity to send written comments to the FOIA Council and ask that these be directed to the appropriate committee for consideration.

RCPS is fully committed to transparency, accountability, and actively engaging stakeholders, but the unnecessarily onerous requirements for Board Committee Meetings are actually an obstacle to meaningful participation by the families we serve.

Specifically, fully online Committee Meetings should be an opportunity to be responsive and to encourage engagement. The unnecessarily strict limits on fully online committee meetings severely limit these opportunities.

We fully support the essential need to provide adequate notice and multiple methods for citizens to participate in Board Committee meetings, but limiting the number, frequency, and requiring a physical presence of Board Members is excessive.

For example, issues arise at the start of every school year...many such issues would benefit from thoughtful consideration by a Board Committee. Ideally, a fully online committee meeting could be scheduled, properly noticed, and convened in a timely manner. Under the current regulations, if the committee's previous meet happened to be online, the effort to be prompt and responsive would be undermined by the requirement that no two online committee meetings be consecutive. If a Board Member who leads the committee works an hour away, scheduling a date and time meet will likely be weeks later to enable the Board Member to arrange for up to a half day off from work.

Virtual committee meetings are considerably easier to schedule with Board Members who can much more easily carve out an hour to participate remotely than they can

schedule the multiple hours necessary to travel, park, meet, depart, return, and resume their regular, full-time work responsibilities.

Virtual committee meetings are also considerably more convenient for most of the families we serve. Virtual meetings don't require childcare, permit citizens to choose which parts of the agenda are of interest to them, and just generally increases the number of citizens who will connect and be engaged in the work of the committee.

Please consider recommending that the General Assembly eliminate the limits on number, frequency, and physical presence of Board members from the current, long list of rules and restrictions regarding fully online committee meetings to improve responsiveness and engagement by local Boards.

Respectfully submitted,

Alan Seibert

H. Alan Seibert, Ed.D.

Constituent Services and Government Relations Officer

FOIA Officer

40 Douglass Avenue, NW | Roanoke, VA 24012

O: (540) 853-2007 | C: (540) 685-7412

www.rcps.info