

Draft Minutes
Chariho Regional District School Committee
SPECIAL MEETING 2/3/26

Attendance:

Louise Dinsmore, Chair
Laura Chapman, Vice Chair
Polly Hopkins
Craig Louzon
Linda Lyall
Larry Phelps
Patricia Pouliot
Jessica Purcell
Karen Reynolds
Dianne Tefft

Angela Brasil, Clerk

I. Call to order – Chair Dinsmore called this meeting to order at 7:30pm and led the assembly with the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence. She stated that although there are two items listed for discussion on this agenda tonight, she thought there would only be one, but would address that when we get to that point on the agenda.

Chair Dinsmore addressed a member of the audience who was interested in a public forum sign up sheet. Chair Dinsmore stated that once the Committee has had a chance to speak on the item at hand, if there is a member of the public that wishes to offer input, she will recognize them to speak. Mr. Moffitt, A member of the public called “point of order”, stating that this Committee’s “Rules of Conduct” state that they shall have a public forum at every meeting and doesn’t specify the difference between a special or regular meeting. He was curious as to why there is no listed public forum tonight stating the following: “Title 16 requires school committees to accept and encourage a variety of opinions from the community, promote communication and understanding with the public, conduct meetings with planned and published agendas. The Chariho School Committee implemented these statutory obligations by adopting rules of conduct governing its meetings. “Section 1 subsection B authorizes the calling of special meetings but does not alter the meeting procedures or agenda requirements. Section 1 C mandates that the agenda for the school committee meetings shall include a public forum permitting only reordering of agenda items by majority vote not elimination. Section one subsection D establishes the sole mechanism for deviating from these requirements by allowing suspension of the rules only upon two thirds vote the committee. Title 16 does not authorize deviation from the adopted procedures and absent a formal suspension of the rules. The committee remains obligated to conduct all meetings including special meetings in accordance with section one subsection C including public”.

Chair Dinsmore stated that per her recollection, we did have a Special Meeting in August (2025) to discuss the hiring of vendors for the State I and Stage II application. At that time, she does not remember having public comment as part of the agenda. However, she inquired with Atty. Anderson for guidance as they recently had a conversation about this topic and some ambiguity surrounding it. Atty. Anderson answered that they had discussed this topic and it is his belief that 1B applies to special meetings, 1 C applies to regular meetings. That being said, there is nothing that precludes the chair from allowing people to speak during the meeting. So, bottom line is we all get to the same place. We may get there by different routes. Chair Dinsmore thanked Atty. Anderson and stated again: “once the school committee has had a chance to talk about the topic at hand, we can take public comment. It is just going to depend how many people um stand up for public comment. So, we'll get there and once we get there, and I will allow the public to speak.”

II. Discussion and Vote to Review and Amend the “Chariho School Committee Rules of Conduct” – Request by D.T. Chair Dinsmore turned this discussion over to Member Tefft who read the following aloud: “Thank you. Good evening, fellow committee members, superintendent, staff, and members of the public. Tonight, we are considering

updates to the Chariho School Committee's rule of conduct. These rules exist to help ensure that our meetings remain efficient, effective, and focused on the important work of serving our students, families, and communities across the Chariho Regional School District. Our current rules of conduct give us general guidelines for items such as meeting procedures, meeting times, the order of meeting agendas, Robert's rules of order being the guide used for our meetings, agenda development, communication, and requests for information by members, ethics and violation. However, the lack of decorum and outbursts by members at school committee meetings over the last year have highlighted the need for revisions to our rules of conduct. These revisions will strengthen and clarify certain provisions to better address behaviors that disrupt a quorum, hinder our ability to conduct business, and distract us from the respectful environment we all strive to maintain. The proposed updates I suggest aim to reinforce core principles of courtesy, mutual respect, and professionalism among committee members. Principles that model the same standards we expect in our schools and that support constructive collaboration on behalf of our students. These changes are not about limiting legitimate debate or differing viewpoints among committee members. Robust discussion is essential to our democratic process. Rather, they are intended to provide clearer guidelines and decorum expectations among members so that decisions can be made thoughtful and without disruptions. and our meetings can serve as positive examples of civic engagement. I believe these refinements will help our body fulfill our responsibilities more effectively while upholding the integrity and collegiality that our community deserves. In reading the feedback online from members of the public, it came to my attention that I used the word participants in my suggested language for revisions when it should have, more appropriately, said school committee members. With that being said, **I make a motion to adopt the updated rules of conduct as distributed to school committee members with references to participants replaced by school committee members and removal of the first bullet point of 5C under enforcement language.** Okay, thank you.” (red-lined document attached – **Addendum A**)

Chair Dinsmore thanked Member Tefft for her statement and asked if we had a second to her motion to adopt these changes. Member _____ asked for clarification as stated: “So you want to remove the first bullet point under C under 5C under enforcement language?” Member Tefft: Correct. “I would suggest another additional small change to the last bullet point just above C which says *no person shall engage*. I would change that to *no school committee member as well as participants*, so it's very clear these are the rules of conduct for the school committee members.

Chair Dinsmore asked Member Tefft if she wanted to include that statement as a potential change to her motion? Member Tefft agreed stating: “**Yes, I would change *no person to no school committee member***. Exactly.” Chair Dinsmore called for a second to Member Tefft’s motion with this additional change. **Member Hopkins seconded the motion.**

Chair Dinsmore called for further discussion: Member _____ inquired: “So just for clarification purposes Diane if I'm understanding you correctly in your redlined version under decorum - #5 under decorum, - under general principles and overarching statements- I'm just making sure that I'm looking for all the words *participants and committee members* it **says committee members and participants**, so we are scratching “participants” in that bullet? Member Tefft replied: Correct. In another area, bullet #4. So, it says *all participants shall conduct themselves with courtesy, respect, and professionalism*. I'm not going to read the whole thing. So, that should say school committee members? Member Tefft replied: Exactly.

Chair Dinsmore stated: “All right. I'm just looking to see if there's another area where it says participants - specific behavioral expectations, bullet number three. Okay. So that would go from participants to *school committee members*.” Correct? So, in that motion, *under B5* it says *no person* - so we're going to say *no school committee members shall engage in conduct* there, and then we are removing the enforcement language C, the first bullet, correct? Did I get all that?” Member Tefft replied: “Yes, you did it correctly.” “All right. Thank you.”

Chair Dinsmore called for further discussion from the members and Member Purcell stated “to start, I generally feel that special meetings should be reserved for urgent district matters. This is our second one within matter of months. Right in our rules of conduct, it says that special meetings may be called for grievances, student discipline hearings, personal matters, litigation, and negotiations. But this doesn't fit any of those categories. I think it's important that we prioritize the most important topics that put our students first.

Regarding the additions presented, Member Purcell stated that she thinks they are way too subjective to feelings and bias, rather than procedure and orderly composure of meetings. You did address the fact that they blur the lines between school committee members and the public, but I also think they pose a threat to freedom of expression and who determines how we can express ourselves in these meetings. I think any revision to this policy should align with Robert's Rules of Order, which gives us clear guidelines on how meetings should be organized and how we should be addressing each other. I think they should also comply with the open meetings act and constitutional free speech and expression protections. As mentioned in the policy, Robert's rules are an important framework. They help us maintain order and fair expression of diverse view viewpoints, but they also include guidelines for taking actions if members are out of order in their conduct, which also we have at the end of the rules of conduct already. I also want to mention that Robert's Rules does give the chair authority in maintaining order, but the chair generally cannot remove a member from a public meeting without a vote of the school committee, which is in conflict with the suggested additions to this policy. It's hard to follow when you're making changes in a meeting. You know, there were points that I agreed with, but I think as presented, as I said, they're too subjective there. These edits are subject to personal feelings and interpretation. They include redundancies with the current policy and Robert's rules. So, I would suggest a much shorter section, a much simpler one, that just is called *standards of conduct for school committee members.*"

Member Purcell suggested the following changes and/or additions:

- Discussion about members refraining from materially disrupting proceedings or interfering with other people's ability
- to participate
- Members should prepare for meetings in advance
- Members should refrain from the personal use of devices during meetings. She stated that has been more distracting than anyone's behavior in meetings.
- Members shall wear attire that's appropriate for a public government setting that does not display so slogans, images, or messages" – this is something that Member Purcell reports receiving several messages about from constituents that bothers them, and it's come up in meetings before.
- The chair may issue warnings taking caution to ensure that rules are applied equally and not based on a speaker's viewpoint.

Member Purcell stated that she thinks these standards are observable objectives, not based on feelings, and it makes that more realistic to enforce fairly and evenly for all members. She was surprised that there weren't any edits to the rest of the policy; When she wants to make changes to a policy, she looks at the whole policy. So, there were other things within here that she thought could be um added:

- 1D. It talks about each member having the ability to hold the floor twice, but there's a ten-minute window. So, you can hold the floor twice. Robert's rule specifies 10 minutes at a time. That might be good to add here.
- It also says that the school committee may give responses. She asks that statement be broadened to include *the superintendent and administrative staff*, which is a common practice that we already observe.
- Could we shorten this section and just refer to the public forum policy, which is a separate policy we already have.
- Include that school committee members can vote to extend public forum past 30 minutes if there is a motion to do so, and there's a two-thirds majority vote. That's according to Robert's rules.
- 1G, it says that it talks about sealed executive session minutes. I think that should be expanded to *discussion proceedings and minutes because it's not we're not just supposed to keep the minutes to yourselves, but also what we talk about and um what happens in those meetings.*"

Chair Dinsmore stated: " All right, we have a motion and a second on the language that Diane suggested and in the overall policy.

Member Purcell said, " I'd like to finish speaking. I'm almost done."

Chair Dinsmore stated, "I understand that, Jess. So, do you have a point of order?"

Member Purcell said, “What I would like is to finish my thought”. A member of the audience spoke out saying, “She was in the middle, you cut her off,” to which Chair Dinsmore stated: “Oh my gosh. Who's literally speaking - First of all, you have not been recognized in the audience. This is a school committee discussion. I have not called on any member of the public. So, when I open it up to the public, you can feel free to say what you need to say, but I will not tolerate tonight discussion and outbursts by the public. This is a school committee discussion right now. I'm sure you have a lot to say, and we will open it up when it's time to open it up. So, we're going to ask that you be respectful and you just let us finish our discussion, please. Thank you.”

Member Purcell continued: “So what I'm saying is germane to the topic at hand and I'd like to finish my suggested changes to the policy that's on the table at the moment.

- 2B, I'd also suggest that we extend the time period for agenda requests from 8 days to 14 days
- 3A, it starts with outside of the meeting setting. It discusses how school committee members should speak only for themselves. I think that it should be during meetings as well. I think that we should just strike where it says outside of the meeting setting. So, it just says school committee members should speak only for themselves. They should avoid giving the impression that they speak for the school committee - I'd like to add- *an the Chariho Regional School District*
- This is not really in this policy, but I also would like to ask the superintendent. She's not at the table, but I'd like to discuss the possibility of asking requiring school committee members to undergo an annual background check, just as volunteers do for the school district.

That's what I have prepared for now. Thank you for letting me finish.

Chair Dinsmore replied: “Sure. Okay. So, you had a number of things there. So, we have a motion on the table regarding Dianne's specific language. I guess, before we get to your suggestions because if you have other suggested changes to the rules of conduct, I think it would be fine to consider any of those additional changes, but the motion right now is on the floor Dianne's suggested language that has been redlined. So, we had a motion and a second on that. So, is there any other feedback on that?

Member Louzon asked “Why now? We're starting to come together, and this is a very divisive issue. Why would we want to do this now? We've not got much more time left as a committee, and you really want to hit the hornets' nest. So, that's all I got to say.”

Chair Dinsmore stated: “I appreciate your feedback. I think that there have been members around the table, and I'm not going to speak for any other member but myself, but what I will say is that there have been you know inappropriate outbursts that have been unbecoming. I feel it has impeded our ability to work together as a group. So, I think that there needs to be some more specific guidelines just about behavior. Diane brought the agenda item forward. I know that there have been other members around the table that have had a lot of negative feelings about our ability, or sometimes our inability, to have productive discussions around the table. I don't think it's great that, you know, we're here at this point, but I think we should come together, and we should make a renewed commitment to come together for this next year of time that we have left. So, thank you for that feedback”.

Member Lyall commented regarding the renewed commitment and stated that she's feeling a bit pressured because it seems the Chair is not allowing any of Jessica's ideas to be put into this motion. She understands that a motion was made and seconded, to accept it as proposed, but we've never really done that before. We've always included other people's suggestions. She feels that this is a policy that needs further review because Member Purcell made some suggestions that she really agrees with and should be included. Absolutely. we had a motion on the table.

Chair Dinsmore stated: “So, I think that if we have a motion on the table, we have to talk about the motion on the table first, okay, and then if there are any other updates or any other revisions that other members have...”

Member Purcell stated: "But if the motion on the table passes, then there's no other revision."

Chair Dinsmore stated: "There's no other on this, but there could be another motion to make an to make updates to the rules of conduct." Member Purcell stated: "Why would we want to do that? We've done that before and I still have problems with some of the language. I feel it's ambiguous."

Member Lyall stated: I feel it gives the chair....you know.... like it gets to the point where I'm going to feel that, you know, I have to be careful what I say and how I say things. Even if I do get angry at some point in time, that's okay. You've become angry at meetings. We all have, and I agree with Craig. I think that we were on a path of actually working towards together as a group and now we're sort of back to it. It is derisive. I don't understand why we need to do this, and I agree with Jessica that I would rather spend my time working on things that are important to teachers and kids and learning and keeping the schools open. I don't think we need this to be quite honest with you. Okay. At this point, I think if we follow Robert's rules and you as chair follow Robert's rules, I think we could have very productive meetings. That's how I feel."

Chair Dinsmore asked: "So, would you categorize the outbursts in the past as productive and conducive to collegiality, because I haven't felt that way."

Member Lyall replied: "How many outbursts? I mean, I'll say I had one outburst. I mean, so Karen had one outburst. I don't know. There's not been like lots of them. I you I think you're more uncomfortable with the public forum. I really do. that I am what I'm saying. You're most uncomfortable with some of the things that have been said during public forum."

Chair Dinsmore stated: "I've listened to everything" to which Member Lyall replied, "I know you have and I and I'm not saying you haven't and as chair I too had I had my cross to bear, and I know other chairs have too. You just have to listen. I just feel that this is not helpful at this point in time."

Member Chapman stated that she feels there may be a difference of opinion on this (the outbursts) because we only have one meeting a month, but she believes there have been multiple outbursts over the course of the last year and from her personal perspective, to be on the receiving end of something like that from other Committee Members is not helpful and doesn't feel very good. She feels that laying some ground rules like this is a good idea and it's really not directed toward the public; it's just about the decorum and trying to move forward on the right path. She doesn't feel there is anything outrageous in any of the language proposed. Further, she feels that while everyone on this Committee realizes that we interpret things differently, if you go back to multiple meetings, you will see that there are certain things that do tend to happen that make it very uncomfortable for some people and she'd like to avoid that.

Member Reynolds stated that avoiding discomfort is not always possible. The words used in the policy in regard to decorum are about limiting free speech; giving the chair the power to silence speakers that she may disagree with. I will own the outburst that I had, but words like respectful, productive, courtesy, ridicule, anger, rudeness, impatient are subjective terms and can easily lead to unequal application. Question for the chair: Were you being respectful and courteous on June 17th, 2025, when you turned to the audience and stated: "I'm not finished. I gave everybody the opportunity to express their views this month and last month. I'm going to finish my statement as Donna finished her statement last month. Don't be disrespectful." Chair, were you angry, impatient, rude, or were you agreeable, tolerant, and compassionate? Again, these are subjective terms that can be interpreted differently by each person. During the same six-minute speech, you stated, quote, "I am the chair of this committee, an equal member of this committee. The sooner you and the Chariho community accept that, the sooner we can all move forward to act in the best interest of the students of this district". Again, was that professional, respectful, and courteous, or was it demonstrative, disrespectful, discourteous? I think it is safe to say we all have our moments, but now you want to have control over what is acceptable and unacceptable. We don't need this policy. Can we all do better – absolutely - but this speaks, this looks like, feels like, and sounds like a limitation to people's free speech, even at this table.

Member Hopkins stated that Member Purcell suggested quite a few changes, but she wondered if anybody had emailed in any suggestions after the agenda was submitted on Friday and sent out to the school committee members. Did anyone have any suggestions? Did any send any to the chair? (No, not any members)

Member Purcell stated: "I had one word and it went off of the word that I suggested we change; I was being consistent" – Member Hopkins called point of order to finish her comment – she stated that none of these are any good unless they are enforced. She feels that she's seen so many of these in the last three and one-half years and, in her opinion, she feels the rules of conduct have been broken, stomped on, and overall misused. She suggested everyone read the last paragraph of when she was censured and stated that the procedure for censuring was not followed correctly so she wasn't given any kind of certified letter or information about being censured. She wasn't provided the proof of what she was being censured about, so these rules are only as good as the paper they are being printed on unless they're enforced and upheld by everyone of this committee, with respect.

Member Purcell followed up stating that folks have expressed discomfort at things that have been said and heard in these meetings. She feels there is recourse for that within a meeting and if something happens we can always call point of order to call attention to inappropriate behavior. However, it's subjective to base statements on personalities rather than an issue at hand. If she were to say someone's behavior is inappropriate, wouldn't that be subjective? Call a point of order if someone goes off topic not to debate personalities and not issues. This is based on Robert's Rules and our Current Code of Conduct.

Member Louzon asked if the present rules of conduct is also considered a policy. It is. As such, he wonder's why it can't go before the Policy Subcommittee first. Chair Dinsmore replied that at one of our previous meetings, Member Tefft asked that it be a special meeting about this topic. When she reviewed agenda items with the Superintendent, because our meetings were quite long (sometimes beyond 10 o'clock) they discussed having a special meeting for it. Member Louzon asked again why it did not go before the Policy Subcommittee first. Member Hopkins reminded this body that she asked Atty. Anderson to look at the Formation of Policies Policy because there is no mention of the Policy Subcommittee there, so it's a sketchy area and she feels it should be mentioned. Member Reynolds suggested that this go to the Policy Subcommittee as well, understanding that we've already amended the proposed language and made a motion and a second, but with so many other considerations made verbally tonight, she feels it should be looked at by the subcommittee to be vetted out there.

Chair Dinsmore, to clarify, asked Member Tefft if she's just adding her language to the existing policy. She stated that it is correct. Chair Dinsmore added her thoughts and comments to this conversation as noted: "So, our school committee meetings should model the respectful civil dialogue we expect in our classrooms and our district. members exhibiting raised voices, engaging in personal attacks, interruptions, other disruptive behaviors detract from our shared purpose of acting in the best interest to move our district forward in the spirit of excellence. In our exchanges as school committee members, we should strive to embody patience, kindness, self-control, and both our words and tone. Me incl myself included. There have been occasions when voices have been raised in frustration toward one another. We should remember and be mindful that we serve the public best by choosing restraint, seeking understanding, and maintaining composure even in disagreement. Moving forward, let us as school committee members commit to the highest standards of decorum, listening attentively without interrupting, maintaining respectful body language and tone, refraining from side conversations, and treating each other's views with respect. If members wish to share opinions about fellow members or broader matters outside of the meeting context, you're free to exercise your free speech rights through letters to the editor, social media, on your own time. However, when we convene as a public body to conduct the district's business, we must hold ourselves to the highest standards of professionalism, ensuring our environment, ensuring an environment where mutual respect and decorum guide every interaction. We face several consequential decisions ahead. As we talked about earlier in our earlier meeting, we have a fiscal year 27 budget. We have an elementary school capital improvement plan that will define our school facilities for generations. In order to deliberate these important matters and all district matters and business effectively, I feel that we must ground our discussions in mutual respect and make a renewed commitment to that. In my view, maintaining the highest standards of civility is every bit as essential and timely as the substance of the issues we are addressing. I want to thank Diane for bringing this in what I feel is an important topic forward for the special meeting. I think it's something that we've needed to

discuss and address as a body of 12. I know tonight we're only a body of nine, but I think it's something that we've needed to discuss and address for some time and to be candid with each other and to listen to each other. Over the last year, honestly, there have been instances where remarks aimed at myself personally have felt deeply, frankly, hateful and vile, inappropriate at times, and out of bounds. Worse, there have been times when the intensity of our discussions and votes left me personally feeling unsafe as I left our meetings. That's not how any of us should feel while serving our community as public servants. In today's climate, where political tensions too often spill into intimidations or even violence against public officials nationwide, it's more important than ever that we set a different standard here. We can and must prioritize mutual respect and safety for everyone at this table. Our district prioritizes kindness at every level. When I went to the budget meeting yesterday in the administration building, there are I think on Greg Zenyan's door, there's something about kindness. We have kind confidence clubs. Kindness, you know, reflects in the vision 2026 strategic plan at all levels. In turn, the school committee should be that model for kindness, should be that model for dignity and respect. Whenever we fall short of embodying those values, we fail in our common humanity. Diane, I think your recommendations for revising our rules of conduct are well considered and timely. I wholeheartedly endorse them with the revisions that you made. I think that you respected the input of the public and I appreciate that. With your revisions, you make an emphasis in placing and upholding civility and decorum among school committee members because these are school committee rules of conduct, and I hope that this can help us in our work together moving forward. So those are my comments. Now, I will open it up now to the community if anyone would like to speak. So, what I would like to do is if you would like to speak, I'm going to ask you to line up behind the podium, and I will give every community member three minutes to speak. I'm just going to ask each of you that raised your hands to please line up behind the other because I would like to be mindful and respectful of time tonight. I am trying to make sure that we don't go beyond 10 o'clock. Vice Chair Chapman will keep time for us, when the timer goes off, I will ask you to wrap it up."

Public Comment

Mr. Gary Stoner, Richmond, RI - I sent you an email earlier today, not early enough for the agenda. I believe the policy Ms. Tefft submitted was done in good faith, but it is redundant with what already exists in terms of the School Committee Code of Conduct or Robert's Rules of Order (re: the principles for conducting oneself as part of a School Committee. If you keep in mind that the first point of the school committee members' responsibilities is to serve children first to put the schools and the children first, and you do that all the time, then you won't need guidelines or codes of conduct and so on. In any case, this proposal is completely redundant with what already exists, but what already exists needs to be paid attention to. And secondly, I completely object to putting the responsibility to infer what is right or wrong in the hands of this chair or any other chair. I think you are essentially wasting your time and should be home with your families. Chair Dinsmore asked for Mr. Stoner to clarify if he thought these "rules" were just for the Chair or the Committee at large as any member can put up a point of order on these decorum points. Mr. Stoner stated that from what he read, the Chair would be the judge of the School Committee.

Debbie Miller, Cranston, RI - I think one of the things you should consider moving forward is to make your school committee nonpartisan. I think that would make things a lot easier for everybody. I also wanted to know what the I just wanted to know what the process is for reporting a school committee member that's perhaps out of hand. I mean, I saw that there was something for like repeated offenses, but I don't see like for the day-to-day. So, would it be appropriate for me today to put in a formal complaint against Polly Hopkins? When I approached her earlier and I asked her if she could ask you where I could sign up, she totally dismissed me and I felt very, very offended um when she did that. I didn't think that was professional at all. I don't think it would live up to the standards that you're trying to set here. I think that if school committee members can't act professionally, then you shouldn't be sitting on the school committee. Okay? It's the same thing when you go to work. If my subordinate was unprofessional, they'd be done. If they were rude to a client they'd be done. It should be the same thing for the school committee. If you don't know how to behave appropriately, then leave. I think that this whole policy that you're trying to put forth should be tabled until you can figure it out. I think that the policy subcommittee should be formatted a little bit more specifically, so you know like what goes first, what goes second. It sounds like you're very confused here. I just want to say that the rules of conduct should be your normal everyday way of life. So, if you can't per

perform professionally in here and you can't perform professionally in your private life, then you shouldn't sit on the school committee. For instance, let's just say you're on social media and you post something on your personal page, granted it's your personal social media, but you post something that's like a little bit unprofessional, like would you hang it on the wall behind you? Like a photo of Nazis and members of the LGBTQ community. Would you post that? I wouldn't allow people to post that where I work. So, I would suggest that the vote be taken and um that you table it until you could figure it out. Thank you.

Member Hopkins replied: "Excuse me, Miss Debbie Miller of Cranston. Could I ask you to clarify something for me or let me just give you some info. Is this okay? Well, she asked who to contact, and you can contact the Rhode Island Ethics Commission. If you believe when you came up behind me two inches from my face and asked that, and I didn't react so you felt offended, please contact them. Okay. Thank you. 401222 3790.

Chair Dinsmore stated: "I'm going to just ask school committee members to refrain from speaking to the public because we really shouldn't be engaging, back and forth, during this time of public comment. I appreciate it. Also, the school committee members shouldn't speak from the sidelines."

Member Louzon stated: "I will clarify only because I've been down this road. Public forum before, the meeting prohibits the school committee members from interacting with the public on a large scale. You can clarify questions. You can ask things, but this is an agenda that's opened up and the public is commenting. We're allowed to have a back and forth and discussion."

Mr. Olean from the public openly stated (without being recognized) that "For future reference, your two outbursts were wrong. And this is why you were wrong by Robert's Rules. Okay, you asked the chair the question, the chair will ask the person standing at the podium. Madam Chair, all remarks are addressed to the chair."

Chair Dinsmore stated: "Thank you, Mr. Olean, I haven't recognized you but thank you, and Thank you Craig, for correcting me.

Justin Bentley, Ashway, RI

Madam chair, thank you, for engaging in dialogue back and forth and for allowing public forum. I appreciate that. I was afraid that wouldn't happen and thank you Ms. Tefft, for striking the language about the word participants. I think this was why so many people are here, as we were all a little leery about that. So just for clarification all of the items we were discussing today apply solely to the school committee not to the public. (Correct) At least that's what Ms. Tefft's revisions reflect. Okay. The fear of limiting freedom of speech and being able to express oneself was mentioned earlier. I would really appreciate it if we would continue to be allowed to speak, as long as it's not disruptive to the meeting, during a public forum, without being boisterous. If something is mentioned that we may feel passionate about, maybe something great for Chariho schools, I would like to continue to be able to express by approval. So, thank you.

Catherine Guisti, from Hopkinton

With all the changes that you've proposed tonight, I think it's very unwise to vote on this policy now. I think that you have fundamentally changed what your initial thoughts were. I think that taking the enforcement language out of it, while I appreciate that, I don't understand why any of the rest of them are necessary, I also appreciate that it's not applied to participants because that is against everybody's freedom of speech. I understand that these meetings are uncomfortable. You know, I was the chair during meetings. Linda was a chair. Craig was a chair, and they were very uncomfortable. We had people with signs and a picket line out front. We had people yelling at us from the audience, you're always going to have some level of discomfort. You should not feel personally unsafe; if you feel personally unsafe, that's a problem and that's something you need to address with someone who's making you feel that way. I think you're taking this too far. You already have a difficult job, Madame Chair, and to now add on to your plate that you need to on the fly, subjective decisions as to whether you think someone is going to be aggrieved by the tone that someone else is using, makes that job impossible not only for you, but these are rules that you're making for any other chairperson who comes after you. So, I think these are unwise. I understand and do appreciate the conversation, but I think if you're really serious about making these

revisions, it should go back to the policy subcommittee so that you can maybe lower the temperature a little bit, have some more time. Jess (Member Purcell) had many suggestions. I don't think you're prepared to make this the decision tonight. You shouldn't be prepared with all of this new information that's been brought forward to you. Thank you.

Member Purcell added that if we truly are in the spirit of collaboration and working together, she feels that the edits she suggested are valid and deserve to be considered. She doesn't think we should rush ahead to put in changes now. She feels that if the Committee does want to work together on this, there's a better way to do it than to just push forward with these changes tonight.

Greg Avedesian, From Hopkinton

I think I want to recognize Title 16 #11 in your packets. It says: The first and greatest concern must be the educational welfare of the students attending the public schools. I agree with Member Louzon, that these changes are not going to make you a more effective group. It's difficult, and I've been there, I've had my own outbursts and it's a tough job being Chair. You just have to bear with it and respect the job that you are all doing together. Believe it or not, I do thank you for your service. However, I do think it's a bit premature to move on it tonight. Member Purcell has brought up some very good points and there's nothing to stop you from either tabling this or amending it based on some of those other suggestions. I do think you'll be rushing into something if you vote now. In the end, it's just going to make the divide even wider.

Simon Manlove, Hopkinton, RI

The stated aim of these changes to the policy was to enable productive discussion between the members of the school committee and to make sure that that discussion is respectful in nature. However, given the language of the current proposal, I do not believe that it adequately addresses that concern and that the language used is vague in a manner that makes it unhelpful for that purpose and possibly dangerous to include for its use in other purposes. Specifically, the changes that were proposed by Madame Tefft for this meeting, to change the language from referring to participants and members to only referring to members, are very important and represents a good change. However, that does not address the fact that several of the clauses and points in the language currently on the floor do not have a subject. There is no subject mentioned in the line. It does not say members. It does not say participants. It does not say anybody and is therefore open to interpretation as to whom that language may be construed towards or against. Okay. In addition to that, the language of this proposal as a whole is linguistically inconsistent with the rest of the document. It does not use a formalized language stating whom it applies to, whom it will be enforced by, how it applies, and under what circumstances it applies that are included in the rest of the clauses of the school committee's code of conduct. For this reason, it is also very broadly applicable in situations that do not apply to its stated purpose. In addition to this, many of its provisions of when it shall apply use words that do not have a definitive meaning under its own definitions. The code of conduct does not specifically and rigorously define the terms that are used in this particular addition, nor are they specifically defined anywhere in other legal documents that are referred to in this code of conduct, which means that all of its provisions are extremely open to interpretation. In light of that, I would consider it not even for reasons of any of this policy, but simply for reasons of the vagueness of the entirety of the procedure and its openness to possible legal challenge, frankly, to be Chair Dinsmore stated: "May I just interject, if you don't mind? So, our um attorney did review Dianne's suggested revisions. So, I don't believe that Mr. Anderson had any issues with the language that was brought forward." Very well. All right.

Chair Dinsmore: "Thank you. I'm going to have to hold you there. Thank you."

Member Purcell stated: We have to allow him to continue. Can we vote to overrule your ruling? So, do we need a two thirds majority to vote to have him continue?

Chair Dinsmore: Okay. I'm not sure. Can we ask Atty. Anderson? Do we need a two-thirds vote to extend. (Yes, there's some that need a simple majority and there's some that need two-thirds. This is a two-thirds."- J. Anderson)

Motion: by Member Purcell seconded by Member Louzon, to allow this speaker to continue. **Vote:** 8 in favor (Chapman, Dinsmore, Louzon, Lyall, Phelps, Pouliot, Purcell, Reynolds, Tefft) and 1 opposed (Hopkins). **Approved.**

Chair Dinsmore gave Mr. Manlove the floor for another minute to finish his comments.

Mr. Manlove thanked her and continued: For these reasons, I would consider it not a problem of the policy contained in these revisions, but simply unwise at the current time and state of this revision to attempt to put this language and these particular ideas into effect as an official policy. This needs additional polish and clarification as to exact standards; and this needs to be definitive and objective in a way that the proposed language is currently not. Thank you

Goldie Williams, Richmond, RI

I want to say that there was a time when Laura and Louise got attacked and they needed a police escort out of this meeting, and I didn't think that was right. As for being for all kids all the time, not by me, especially my oldest son. Okay. Thank you.

Bruce Olean, Richmond, RI

I'm going to keep this well under three minutes. I want to start with a small apology to Madame Chair. Generally speaking a member of the public has a right to raise a point of order or a point of privilege which I did incorrectly. First, the Chair must accept the point of order and ask what it is, but I skipped that step, so I apologize for that. Chair Dinsmore: No problem. Secondly, in a positive spirit, I think this is pretty good stuff overall and I commend Dianne Tefft for trying to write the policy. I think it's well meant. I have a couple of things that I think are wrong with it. Being a Christian and starting with our Jewish roots, the ten commandments, are all "thou shalt not... thou shalt not...etc." so a lot of people ask "what should I do", well that's why we have Matthew 5 that says, "blessed are the peacemakers, the humble, " etc... you get my point- although Ms. Tefft's policy language is well written, grammatically correct, etc. and I loved that (as an English teacher), it is very negative. I would suggest it go to a committee. I've been on many committees during my education days and when we had a policy we usually had one person write it and then other's sit down and with the chair and tear it apart. You've got to have at least three or four linguistically aware people; no disrespect to the author as I think she was very well-intentioned. Ten years from today, if someone reads this policy, they might say what the heck was going on at Chariho....It should be more positive because you people are about being more positive. It's almost contradictory to an extent. I would like to see it go to a small group of people who carry it forward with the intention to strike out or minimize some of the negative words. Robert's rules of order can be summarized in one sentence. Civil behavior for a deliberative body to move forward. Civil was the key word. I would suggest that you table this for the time being.

Chair Dinsmore stated: "So, I think that the bullets that Diane put forward for the most part are in a positive context. Committee members are encouraged to model the respectful behavior we expect of students and staff in our schools. All communications whether spoken or written, should reflect the highest standards of professional decorum and avoid any appearance of bias, discrimination or disrespect. So, I think I would push back on you a little bit, Bruce, about the thou shalt part, and I appreciate your feedback on that. With a motion on the floor are we ready to vote?"

Member Chapman asked about the amendment and referenced the many items that Member Purcell brought up as being a lot for her to process in one setting. She is wondering if Dianne's piece of this can go on for a vote about the rules of conduct under decorum, and the changes agreed to there, but with Jess's additional things by her suggestions, could go to the policy subcommittee, which we've already been told by Gina will not be meeting until after budget season is over.

Chair Dinsmore called for a vote – All those in favor of moving forward with the decorum section of the rules of conduct as Dianne submitted, with her revisions from tonight, raise your hand. 5 in favor (Chapman, Dinsmore, Hopkins, Phelps, and Tefft); 4 opposed (Louzon, Lyall, Purcell and Reynolds). Motion carried. **Approved.**

Member Purcell asked if she could make a motion to send the policy to the subcommittee as well. Chair Dinsmore asked if she was making a motion for her (Member Purcell's) revisions to the rules of conduct to go to the policy subcommittee? Member Purcell stated that she's making a motion for the entire policy to go before the policy subcommittee for further review. Chair Dinsmore inquired: So, for a specific reason for what's going to go to the policy subcommittee? I mean if the school committee voted on including this language as part of decorum, and it has been adopted as part of the rules of conduct." Member Purcell replied that multiple folks expressed interest at incorporating her amendments and she understands why they can't be made right now but also, she feels there can still be more discussion around the changes that Ms. Tefft rolled into this document. Therefore, she'd like it to go to the policy subcommittee. Chair Dinsmore stated: "Sure. So, if you want to, you can put that forward at our next school committee meeting, if you have revisions to the rules of conduct for some other items, either its meeting procedures or agenda development." Member Purcell asked, "Can I make a motion now?" (yes)

Motion: Member Purcell - I make a motion to send this policy to the policy subcommittee for further revision. Member Reynolds seconded this motion.

Chair Dinsmore stated that we just had a discussion and voted on this and asked: "So, just to clarify this is this would be regarding not what we at all just discussed at length. This would just be in reference to the ones that you had spoken about previously. Correct?" Member Purcell replied: People can make other changes as well. I don't think it can be specific. Chair Dinsmore replied: "So, I'd just like to weigh in on that. I mean we just had a discussion on this and we voted. So now to go back and make suggested revisions to whatever Diane..." Member Purcell stated: "you completely ignored my suggestions." Chair Dinsmore: "Then Jess make a motion..." Member Purcell: "I was." Chair Dinsmore: "But we can only consider one motion at a time and the motion on the floor was for Dianne's language. A member of the public called out and told Chair Dinsmore to stop interrupting. Chair Dinsmore stated: "So, you are not recognized by the chair. But okay, but this is exactly why we need rules of decorum among school committee members. Also, when the policy subcommittee meets, I hope that the policy subcommittee will consider rules of decorum and suggestions for decorum, because we can't have people from the audience, you know, disrupting a public meeting. It's just not appropriate, and I think everybody around this table can agree on that."

Chair Dinsmore asked the clerk to restate Member Purcell's motion: "The motion is for the whole policy (School Committee Rules of Conduct) to go before the policy subcommittee"

Member Chapman stated that she felt the motion was ambiguous as they just passed Member Tefft's language in this policy and now it will be reconsidered, so what was the point?

Point of order was called by Mr. Moffitt (member of the public) who Chair Dinsmore asked for a moment.

_____ stated: "Even what was just approved can go to the policy subcommittee and be discussed and then it's going to come back to be voted on here. Correct? Yes - So, I think even though you just voted, you voted on some of the word choice, it can be vetted again and the whole policy can be rewritten, even the decorum section. There were a lot of changes, even to Ms. Tefft's piece that may look differently once it's all typed up."

Chair Dinsmore: "We had a majority vote. It was a five to four vote. Now, to go back and suggest changes when we had a discussion about it, and now we're going to have another discussion about it in a subcommittee to me seems redundant and unnecessary, and not respectful of what the majority just voted. That's my opinion and I'm entitled to it."

So, so hold on. I mean, I would like to add to this, that once you open up the discussion to revote to vote and review and amend the Chariho School Committee Rules of Conduct, you open it up the whole rules of conduct. This isn't just for Diane Tefft's amendment. Once you open up discussion for this and they vote on it, you open up the whole

code of conduct. So, Jess has standing in her comments. This meeting has not yet been adjourned. Okay. You can ask your attorney. I served on a town council. I know when you open something up, that's how it happens.

Chair Dinsmore: "Sure. Okay. So, if you would like to possibly ask Mr. Anderson that question, I would appreciate that and I think everyone here would appreciate that. Okay, so I'll go to Craig first and then I'll um ask Atty. Anderson to weigh in on this. Member Louzon: "Madam Chair, just look at how many times this has already been revised, this policy. Okay, it's been revised 10 times as posted."

Atty. Anderson: "It's my opinion that the motion is within the scope of the agenda item and any member of the school committee can make a motion with regard to the agenda item. If there's a second, then the motion needs to be considered."

Chair Dinsmore: "Of course. Okay. So again, we do have a motion and a second. So, my feedback on this and we're on the discussion part of the motion, right? My feedback on this is similar to Laura's that we had discussion on this. There was language added to the rules of conduct. I don't know why the decorum section would be revised or revisited again at the policy subcommittee level. That's just my opinion." Member Reynolds stated that nobody's saying that it is or isn't, but the policy should go back to the policy subcommittee so that Jess's suggestions can be discussed and possibly incorporated.

Chair Dinsmore: "Sure. I don't I don't think there's any disagreement with that. If you have other adjustments that you want to look at for the rules of conduct, and there were a number of them, and I'm sure, you know, most of them are really good suggestions. If you want to discuss those at length at the policy subcommittee level and then bring those prospective revisions back with a redlined document, just like Diane brought this forward tonight. I don't think that there's any disagreement with that at this table. In my opinion, I don't think that the decorum section should be looked at again, because we already discussed it and we voted on it."

Chair Dinsmore called for a Vote to send this policy to the Policy Subcommittee for further review, per Member Purcell's motion and Member Reynold's second. **Vote: Unanimous in favor. *Approved.***

III. Discussion and vote to review and amend the "Code of Management Principles and Ethical Standards for School Committee Members" – Requested by L.D. Chair Dinsmore stated that there is a little bit of ambiguity and maybe miscommunication on this item as neither she nor Member Tefft requested it. Therefore, she has no discussion. **Motion:** Member Hopkins made a motion to table this agenda item indefinitely, seconded by Member Tefft. Discussion: None. **Vote:** 5 in favor (Dinsmore, Hopkins, Phelps, Pouliot, Chapman); 4 opposed (Louzon, Purcell, Lyall and Reynolds) Motion carried - ***Approved to table.***

Chair Dinsmore called for a motion to adjourn. **Motion:** Member Hopkins made a motion to adjourn this meeting, seconded by Member Tefft. Vote: Unanimous in favor. ***Adjourned.***

This meeting adjourned at 8:47 pm.

Respectfully submitted by

Angela Brasil
Clerk for the Chariho Regional District School Committee