

School Committee for A Day

Sometimes we do not realize how important our town officials are to our community. I have been given the opportunity to recognize their importance on Student Government Day. The town official that I shadowed was a member of the school committee. This group, in particular, isn't fully credited by us for what they do. We may not know it, but they are at the top of the flow chart in directing our schools. With this job there are many responsibilities. Yet, they do it all to help our schools. The school committee was recognized for this on Student Government Day, and I will tell you why.

First off, there are only five members of the school committee. I was able to meet and chat with two of them, Dave DeTerra and Frank Kuthan. My Superintendent, Stephen Donovan, was also present. These men basically gave us the ins and outs of what this job entails. There are three main duties that this job involves: directing the superintendent, policy, and budgeting. They are in charge of firing and hiring the superintendent and evaluating him. They also make and enforce policy in our schools. With budgeting, they work towards staying within the means of the budget for the school year. They do all these things for our school and do not get paid. If this is just a voluntary job, then why do they do it?

The reason why these respected officials take part in making our schools a better learning community for us is because they care. In other words, the money factor is not important to them, but the welfare of our school is. The motive they have for being a part of this committee is to help the children be successful. Their families were involved, inspiring them to give up their time for us as well. What they want to do is give back to the town, since it is their duty to take this place and do what was done for them when they were children. If you ask me, this is reason enough to do

anything, especially if it is something that is helping our community grow for the better.

Of course, in every job there are the ups and downs. When you are in the school committee, these two things happen to be the best and worst components of the job. The parts of their job that make them smile are the positive changes in our community. New programs coming, program updates, successfulness in MCAS, and just the opportunity for the children to move on to bigger and better things like college. Things that will help this generation in the long run and give us the best results possible for the youth of Acushnet.

The down part of this job, like there is in any, would have to be the tax recessions. Without enough revenue there are budget constraints that have to be made. They now have to divide the money and cut certain programs, like late buses, just to get by on the budget. With less money from the taxes, there is less money for our schools. Eighty-five percent of the money that comes from the state goes to our schools, and a lot of it is not getting there. This pains the members of this committee the most to see this happening because they just want what is best for our schools to help us succeed.

When they come in and have the meetings to decide on important matters such as the ones I just brought forward, they need to have a quorum. A quorum is the minimum amount of people needed to start a meeting. The quorum for the school committee is three members. If the quorum is not made, and the required amount of members does not show up to a meeting, then they cannot vote on something binding until they bring it up with the entire committee. They vote on subjects by the policy of majority rule. The chair of the committee, which is Mr. Kuthan, would make a motion. Then someone would second the motion, and it would come to a vote. If there is a tie, they either keep voting until there is a winner, or the chair breaks the tie. Usually,

there are not ties because there are always an odd number of members in the committee. This is the routine for every meeting when they take a vote, and must be done to call attention to the voting.

You might think that there are special requirements needed to become a school committee member, but the answer to that is a plain and simple no. In fact, anyone can become a school committee member as long as they have the will to do so. The only thing needed for a member to do is to take part in a two day seminar, involving the rules and regulations of a school committee member. They follow Robert's Rules of Order, a parliamentary procedure motions guide, as their main set of rules. This basically explains the ethics, or tells them what they can and cannot do as a member of the school committee. Overall though, if you want to take part in the school committee and go to the seminar, you should probably have an interest in schools or something related to this subject.

As we can conclude, there is more to the school committee than you or I might think there is. Many things go on behind the scenes in our town, and we need to take a step back and realize just how important they are. I believe that the school committee does a great job with what they do, and are a treasured part of this community.

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