Finneytown Local Schools

Board of Education Handbook

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Introduction

Board service is both a tremendous challenge and a rewarding commitment. Being elected by a community to act as one of its representatives to the local school district board of education is an opportunity that should not be taken lightly. The board's leadership is crucial to the overall function of the district and its students' achievement.

Purpose of this handbook

This handbook serves as a ready reference for the members of Finneytown Local Schools. It will assist and reinforce the board's work and provide a common understanding of the roles and responsibilities of each board member. It's imperative that all members fully understand their role and work as a cohesive team to effectively govern the district.

This handbook is not intended to replace the board's policy manual. All board members should be well acquainted with the board-adopted comprehensive policy manual. This can be found at: https://go.neola.com/finlsd-oh/policy.

The District

Finneytown Local Schools Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan lays out goals for the district. The plan ensures that student achievement remains paramount with SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound) written in partnership by the Board, Superintendent and Treasurer. Throughout the year, the Superintendent and Treasurer give measured reports to the Board and its committees. It is important for each board member to understand the significance of each reported measure. A mid-summer work session will give the board the opportunity to evaluate the measurements and adjust the goals within the Strategic Plan. It is the Superintendent's role to create active strategies to achieve the goals. It is the Treasurer's responsibility to keep the board updated and to recommend adjustments to maintain proper fiscal stewardship.

A link to the district's current strategic plan may be found here: https://finneytown.org/strategic-plan/

Vision and Mission

Our Vision is to be a learning community that empowers our students and staff to think critically, grow intellectually, and live with integrity.

Our Mission is to foster academic and social growth for each student in a safe, supportive school environment.

Measurements Within the Strategic Plan

Measurements are discussed at least three times per school year.

- At the start of the year to find a baseline
- In the middle of the year to discuss adjustments
- After the close of the year to evaluate successes and growth points

Needed measurements include, but are not limited to: Enrollment data, grade-level GPA, MAP scores, 504/IEP statistics, and Gifted and Honors statistics.

Each measurement will tell its story to the board. Attendance Rate, for example. High attendance rate from students and teachers shows that students are engaged with a positive teaching culture. Low teacher

attendance, on the other hand, indicates that there is an underlying problem that will manifest into poor student achievement if not addressed. Low student attendance also indicates a lack of student engagement and again, student achievement will be poor.

District Guardrails

Guardrails are standards rather than goals. Guardrails are enforced through the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) that the district follows.

Some examples of guardrails are:

- Parent communication must be done within 24 hours
- Student incidents will be thoroughly investigated and concluded in a timely manner with measurable consequences

History of the District

Finneytown is actually not a “town” at all, but a school district community in Springfield Township, north of Cincinnati. Finneytown’s first school board was elected in 1905. A brick building went up in 1915 and became Whitaker Elementary. The first full graduating class of Finneytown was 1959.

A fuller history of the district and the area it represents can be found here:
https://finneytown.org/about/history-of-finneytown/

Finneytown Alumni Network

Average Daily Membership and Demographics

The average school year consists of nearly 1,200 students, grades K-12. We have an average of 130 staff members.

Key Leadership Contacts

Superintendent: Anthony Smith, anthony.smith@finneytown.org
Treasurer: Anita Ruffin, aeruffin@finneytown.org
Assistant Superintendent: Jennifer Dinan, jdinan@finneytown.org
Assistant Superintendent - Director of Operations: Grant Anderson, ganderson@finneytown.org
Special Education Director: Laura Schnieder, lschnieder@finneytown.org

Board Members (2026)

Amy Catanzaro, *Board Member,* acatanzaro@finneytown.org
Chadwick Engleman, *Board Member*, cengleman@finneytown.org
Maggie Laird, *Board Member,* mlaird@finneytown.org
Seth Plaut, *Board President*, splaut@finneytown.org
James “Eddie” Reeb, *Board Vice President*, jreeb@finneytown.org

Organizational Chart

A full district organizational chart can be found in the policy manual and is referenced below. Board members are responsible for the hiring, guidance and evaluation of the superintendent and treasurer. All other administrators and staff in the district are selected, managed and evaluated by these two educational administrators.

The Ohio School Boards Association (OSBA) regularly refers to the board, superintendent and treasurer as the district's leadership team.

Reference Board Policy: *District Organizational Chart,* **po1230.02**

Budget and Financial Information

It's important that board members have a general understanding of the district's budget and can speak to community members and others about the financial position, needs and outlook.

Full budget and finance information is available at this link: https://finneytown.org/about/treasurer-finance/

The board relies on the District's Financial Forecast to guide fiscal decisions. The District's Financial Forecast is reviewed on a regular basis to compare actual expenditures against both the projected forecast and the approved budget. These updates are shared with the Board and discussed at each regular Board meeting to ensure ongoing fiscal oversight.

Details on the current Financial Forecast are linked here.

Reference Board Policy: *Fiscal Planning,* **po6210.**

District Calendar

Board of education members determine the district's calendar and the total number of hours it represents annually. This work is normally approved at the annual Organizational Meeting. More information about the district and school calendar is detailed in the district's policy manual.

Reference Board Policy: *School Calendar,* **po8210**

2026-2027 & 2027-2028 School Calendars

Board of Education Calendar

Board meetings are held monthly and are determined and approved for the year at the Organizational Meeting in January. A full list of current board meetings, including additional or special meetings added during the course of the year, is available on the district website:
https://finneytown.org/about/board-of-education/board-meeting-dates/

Boards of Education

Board Member Authority and Duties

The role and function of a board of education are often misinterpreted by the public and in some instances, by the board members themselves.

The Ohio legislature has essentially delegated the organization, administration and control of the public schools to boards of education. While boards of education have very broad powers, their authority is not unlimited. The courts have held that the board has only such authority as is expressly given by statute or necessarily implied. The courts have generally supported the sound judgment of boards when they act in good faith, are not arbitrary or unreasonable, and are not in clear violation of the law.

A board's primary function is that of policy making. A board should have clear and concise policies to do the job it was elected to do and effect the orderly administration of the district's schools. The task of understanding and approving the policies within the district's policy manual falls directly on the board. Once policies are adopted and administrative procedures are established, the board should depend on its superintendent and treasurer for implementation.

Finneytown Local Schools' policy manual may be found here: https://go.neola.com/finlsd-oh/policy

Board members are not administrators. The function of hiring and evaluating staff is not within the direct authority of the board or its individual members except for the superintendent and treasurer. It is important for the board to ensure that a sound administrative process is in place for the evaluation of all staff and to hold the superintendent and treasurer accountable for the administration of all policies and procedures associated with hiring and managing personnel.

The board is responsible for adopting an evaluation procedure and administering the evaluations of the superintendent (RC 3319.01) and the treasurer (RC 3313.22) in accordance with the adopted procedure. Both of these school administrators should be evaluated each year.

Finneytown's policies related to Superintendent and Treasurer employment and evaluation may be found by:

Reference Board Policy: *Employment of the Superintendent,* **po1220**

Reference Board Policy: *Evaluation of the Superintendent,* **po1240**

Reference Board Policy: *Employment of the Treasurer,* **po1310**

Reference Board Policy: *Evaluation of the Treasurer,* **po1330**

An important function of the board is to be accountable to the community and advise the superintendent on its culture and climate. Board members should be very careful to distinguish between listening to and seeking to understand community members and interceding as an individual in matters pertaining to the entire board, administrators or the district in general.

Individual board members have legal authority only when the board is convened in public session. It is important that individual board members accept and understand their own power as a board member exists only as part of the full board's opinion.

Board Member Code of Ethics

Ohio laws set minimum ethical standards for public officials, including school board members, school district employees and members of school district financial planning and supervision commissions. The ethics law is found in RC Chapter 102. Additionally, there are two ethics restrictions found in the criminal code (RC 2921.42 and RC 2921.43) and two statutes (RC 3319.21 and RC 3313.33), that apply specifically to school board members. It is important to read and understand these statutes.

The Ohio School Boards Association offers the guidelines for good board member behavior as a Code of Ethics. It may be found at: https://www.ohioschoolboards.org/code-ethics but includes the following:

- Remember that my first and greatest concern must be the educational welfare of all students attending the public schools;
- Obey the laws of Ohio and the United States;
- Respect the confidentiality of privileged information;
- Recognize that as an individual board member I have no authority to speak or act for the board;
- Work with other members to establish effective board policies;
- Delegate authority for the administration of the schools to the superintendent, treasurer and other staff;
- Encourage ongoing communications among board members, staff and the community;
- Render all decisions based on the available facts and my independent judgment rather than succumbing to the influence of individuals or special interest groups;
- Make every effort to attend all board meetings;
- Become informed concerning the issues to be considered at each meeting;

- Improve my boardmanship by studying educational issues and by participating in professional development programs;
- Support the employment of staff members based on qualifications and not as a result of influence;
- Cooperate with other board members and administrators to establish a system of regular and impartial evaluations of all staff;
- Avoid conflicts of interest or the appearance thereof;
- Refrain from using my board position for the benefit of myself, family members or business associates;
- Express my personal opinions but, once the board has acted, accept the will of the majority.

Finneytown's board policy on Code of Ethics is another valuable resource.

Reference Board Policy: *Code of Ethics,* **po0123**

Board Officers

In accordance with Ohio statute RC 3313.14, the board elects a President and Vice President at its organizational meeting in January to serve a term of one year. Any member may be voted into either position by a simple majority vote of the members present.

When dealing with conflicts or questions from students, staff and community members, board members should listen with open ears and attempt not to jump to conclusions. Board members should encourage individuals to seek out information with the staff member(s) whose job duties fall under conflict or question. To ensure a good working relationship with the Superintendent, board members need to be cognizant of answers and actions that do not undermine the positions of the Superintendent or Treasurer.

Role of the President

The president presides over all board meetings and carries out other important leadership responsibilities, such as:

- Maintain the orderly conduct of all board meetings;
- Sign all approved meeting proceedings after the signature of the treasurer;
- Act as the board's representative when signing contracts, memoranda of understanding, official board documents;
- Ensure that the community has a voice at meetings (within board policy);
- Call special meetings of the board as necessary;
- Facilitate good communication among the board members and administration.

Role of Vice President

The vice president is authorized to fulfill all responsibilities and duties held by the president, in the event of that person's absence.

Role of the Treasurer Pro Tempore

If the treasurer is absent, the board is required to elect a treasurer pro tempore from its membership. The treasurer pro tempore is responsible for keeping record of the meeting's procedures, including meeting start and end times, taking roll call, keeping record of motions and votes and certifying the contents of the official minutes of the meeting. The district may request a staff member to support the board member in these tasks, but the Treasurer Pro Tempore of record must be a board member.

Reference Board Policy: *Board Officers,* **po0152**

Operating Protocol

Board/Superintendent Relationship

One of the board's greatest responsibilities is the selection and employment of a competent superintendent. The only positions reporting directly to the board are the superintendent and treasurer. The success of Finneytown schools depends to a great extent on the working relationship between the board and superintendent. The most important element of this relationship is trust. Each member of the board needs to understand the role of the board and the role of the superintendent and respect those roles.

The Ohio Department of Education and Workforce (ODEW) defines the role of the superintendent as the district's chief educational leader with direct responsibility for the administration and operation of the school district. The superintendent is charged with implementing board-approved policies and presenting recommendations for board consideration and approval. Communication is crucial to allow the board to function in its role of governance oversight and accountability.

Reference Board Policy: *Board/Superintendent Relationship,* **po1210.**

Board/Treasurer Relationship

The treasurer reports directly to the board and is responsible for the accounting of all money received and spent by the district. The treasurer maintains the official financial records and must keep the board well informed of all financial forecasts, especially the Three-Year Forecast. It is vital that the treasurer work in concert with the board and superintendent to ensure that all district operations have the proper financial capacity. The treasurer also oversees all school records in accordance with state law. In addition to the treasurer's financial duties, he or she acts as the board's secretary. The secretary is responsible for maintaining the official minutes of all board meetings including the date, time, location, board member roll, and record of all actions taken and approved by the board. The treasurer is also quite often the staff member most responsible for fulfilling public records requests.

Evaluation of the Superintendent and Treasurer

The board is required to adopt procedures for the evaluation of its superintendent (RC 3319.01) and treasurer (RC 3313.22). The board must consider the evaluation when deciding to renew or not to renew the superintendent or treasurer. However, the evaluation does not imply continued employment.

Reference Board Policy: *Evaluation of the Superintendent,* **po1240**

Reference Board Policy: *Evaluation of the Treasurer,* **po1330**

Support Organizations & Committees

To help the district and community continue to flourish it is necessary for board members to participate in committees and support organizations that align with his/her expertise and interests. Support Organizations are a significant source of strength and pride in the community. Since board members are elected leaders, leading by example is strongly encouraged. The board member should attend at least half of the meetings and events of the assigned support organization. However, board members must refrain from holding an office within the organization. The member not only runs the risk of "burn-out" but also will violate the Ohio Ethics Commission's Advisory Opinion 2106-01.

Board and Administrative Committees ensure the growth of the district. The Policy Committee reviews and recommends changes to district policies. The Long-Term Facilities Committee reviews and recommends updates to the district facilities, as well as makes a five-year plan for maintenance and capital improvement.

The Finance Committee reviews and recommends changes or concerns of the fiscal needs of the district. The Strategic Planning Committee reviews and recommends goals for student achievement.

Keeping the partnerships with Springfield Township and the Ohio School Boards Association (OSBA) is also important. Board members are needed for representation for these organizations as well.

Reference Board Policy: *Committees,* **po0155**

Board's Role in Employment of School Personnel

Other than the superintendent and treasurer, the board acts on the hiring of all other school employees (RC 3319.07 & 3319.02) but does not participate in the selection of these individuals. No teacher may be initially hired by the district unless such person is first nominated by the superintendent (RC 3319.07). The board may designate someone other than the superintendent to nominate a teacher for employment if the superintendent's nomination would create a conflict of interest in a public contract (RC 3319.07).

In rare cases, the board may vote to re-employ someone even when that is contrary to the recommendation of the superintendent with a three-fourths vote.

Reference Board Policy: *Employment of Administrators,* **po1520**

Reference Board Policy: *Employment of Professional Staff,* **po3120**

Reference Board Policy: *Non-Discrimination and Equal Employment Opportunity,* **po3122**

Reference Board Policy: *Vacancies,* **po3132**

Reference Board Policy: *Employment of Classified Staff,* **po4120**

Board's Role in Termination of School Personnel

As with hiring, no employee may be terminated or non-renewed without official board action.

Reference Board Policy: *Termination and Resignation,* **po3140**

Filling Board Member Vacancies

A vacancy on any board can occur for a variety of reasons, including, but not limited to:

- Death of the sitting member
- Residential move outside the district
- Resignation
- Removal from office
- Failure of a person elected to office to qualify within 10 days after the organizational meeting or of his or her appointment or election
- Accepting a public office that is incompatible with the office of board of education (conflict of interest)

When a vacancy occurs, the board must fill the seat (not earlier than 10 days after the vacancy occurs) at the next regular or special meeting. If the remaining board members cannot agree by a majority vote on a suitable replacement within 30 days, the probate court in the county in which the district is located will appoint a replacement.

Each person selected to fill a vacancy will hold office for the shorter of the following periods:

- Until the completion of the unexpired term, or
- Until Jan. 1 immediately following the next regular Board of Education election if the election occurs at least 90 days after the person is appointed.

Reference Board Policy: *Filling a Board Vacancy,* **po0145**

Reference Board Policy: *Resignation or Removal,* **po0146**

OSBA maintains an updated fact sheet on Filling Board of Education Vacancies.

Removal from Office

All elected officials in Ohio are subject to removal from office for misconduct through a court proceeding pursuant to RC 3.07 and RC 3.08. Grounds for removing a board member may include:

- Willfully and flagrantly exercising authority or power not authorized by the State of Ohio
- Refusing or neglecting to perform any official duty
- Gross neglect of duty
- Gross immorality
- Drunkenness
- Misfeasance, malfeasance, or nonfeasance

To initiate proceedings for removal, a recall petition must be signed by at least 15% of the total vote cast for governor at the most recent election for office of governor. The petition must state the charges alleged against the said board member. The law directs that a hearing on the removal be conducted within 30 days. At the hearing, the judge, or if requested, a jury, may order the removal of a board member.

Compensation of Board Members

Board members may be compensated for their service up to $125 per regular meeting. Regular meetings are scheduled each year at the January Organizational Meeting and are held once per month (Ohio Revised Code Section RC 3313.12, 3311.19). Boards are not required to pay the statutory maximum but may choose to compensate at any rate up to the statutory maximum.

The board may pass a resolution or change board policy to change board compensation amounts at any time, but those changes will apply only to board members beginning new terms or for those appointed to a vacancy after the change is made.

Reference Board Policy: *Compensation,* **po0147**

Professional Development

Board members are expected to seek opportunities for continued professional growth while serving in office. Governance work is important work and continued learning is important to the health of the board and leadership team. The board may authorize compensation of board members for attending approved training programs per RC 3313.12 and RC 3311.19.

Reference Board Policy: *Compensation,* **po0147**

Reimbursement of Expenses

RC 3315.15 permits districts to create a “service fund” which can be used to pay those expenses actually incurred by board members in the performance of their official duties. This fund may not exceed the equivalent of $2 per student enrolled in the district, or $20,000, whichever is greater. It also may be used to pay the expenses actually incurred by board members-to-be for training and orientation occurring between the date of election or appointment and the date of administration of the oath of office. This fund pays for registration, travel and other expenses, and is different from board member compensation for attending training. More information is available at: https://codes.ohio.gov/ohio-revised-code/section-3315.15

Reference Board Policy: *Compensation,* **po0147**

Board Meetings

Board meetings are crucial to the work of the school board. As public officials, the law requires that the board conduct its business in public. No vote is valid unless it is recorded in a public session. The way in which the board conducts its business in public reflects on the quality of the work and the perception of the entire district.

Attendance at Board Meetings

A quorum of members is required for a board meeting to be considered official. In Finneytown, this is defined as three members of the five-member board. As a member of the board, your attendance is crucial to its ability to conduct business. This includes all regularly scheduled sessions, special meetings, retreats and workshops, and emergency sessions.

Ohio law (Section 3.07 and 3.08) provides a process for the removal of a board member if he or she is absent from meetings for a period of 90 days for reasons deemed by the remaining board members as insufficient. Removal of an absent member requires a two-thirds vote of the remaining members.

Types of Board Meetings

A “meeting” is defined as any prearranged discussion of the public business of a board of education, committee or subcommittee by a majority of its members.

There are two basic types of board meetings: regular and special. Under those two overarching headings, there are several variations of meeting formats.

Organizational Meeting

A local school board like Finneytown Local Schools is required to hold a regular “Organizational Meeting” no later than Jan. 15 each year. At this meeting, the board must elect a president and vice president, each to serve a one-year term. Other items typically included in the organizational meeting agenda are:

- Oath of office for new members
- Establishing dates, times and locations for the year’s regular meetings
- Approving membership in the Ohio School Boards Association
- Appointments to the JVS board
- Adoption of the district’s tax budget per RC 5705.28
- Board committee appointments

Board Work Sessions/Retreats

These meetings usually refer to meetings at which the board will discuss matters but take no action. If scheduled at the organizational meeting, work sessions are considered regular meetings. Any meetings, including work sessions not set by the board in January at the organizational meeting, are considered special meetings. Although no votes are typically taken at these meetings, the work session will likely meet the definition of a “meeting” and the Open Meetings Act will apply, including the requirement to properly notice the meeting, make it open to the public, and take minutes.

Emergency Meetings

Boards may hold an emergency meeting to discuss matters of exceptional urgency that require immediate board action. In the event of an emergency, the standard rule of 24-hour notice to the media and 48-hour notice to board members is replaced with a requirement to provide notice as soon as is reasonably practicable.

Executive Session

Executive session is only to be used for specific reasons, clearly indicated in the Sunshine Law. It is vitally important for all board members to observe 100% confidentiality of any items or issues that are discussed. Any discussion of executive session content outside of the session is a serious breach of trust and a sign of poor boardmanship. Discussing executive session content outside of the group present, or the session itself, should be avoided under all circumstances.

Specific legal boundaries for executive sessions are covered in the Sunshine Law and Public Records section. Please review OSBA's fact sheet on Sunshine Law, including reasons to enter executive session.

Reference Board Policy: *Executive Session,* **po0167.02**

Meeting Agendas

As a board member, you're expected to understand the agenda and become familiar with the packet contents before arriving at the meeting. Following a review of the draft agenda and attachments, questions about the agenda should be directed to the superintendent or treasurer.

Who Creates the Agenda?

Meeting agendas are drafted following a discussion between the board president, superintendent and treasurer. Any board member may contact the board president or superintendent to request items for addition to the board meeting agenda. The draft agenda is made available to the board members at least 48 hours before the meeting.

Reference Board Policy: *Agendas,* **po0166**

Amendments to the Agenda

Amendments may be made to the agenda prior to its adoption during the meeting. A majority vote adopts an agenda. After it's adopted, a 2/3 vote or unanimous consent is required to change the agenda.

Reference Board Policy: *Agendas,* **po0166**

Board Meeting Protocol

Meetings follow the guidelines set forth in "Robert's Rules of Order." The treasurer acts as the official record keeper and is responsible for keeping the minutes of the meeting's proceedings. If the treasurer is absent or unable to perform his duties, the board must elect a Treasurer Pro Tempore from its membership to serve in the treasurer's capacity as the meeting record-keeper.

Role of the Board President

The board president has a crucial role as the meeting's parliamentarian. They are responsible for maintaining proper meeting decorum in accordance with "Robert's Rules of Order." It is therefore imperative that the president be well-versed in the points of meeting procedure. The president must ensure that all have a fair and equal voice and should be willing to take control of the meeting should proceedings become disorderly.

Reference Board Policy: *Presiding Officer,* **po0163**

Motions

Superintendent recommendations and other agenda items before the board must be put in the form of a motion (so moved by a member of the board) and seconded by another member before they may be discussed and brought to a vote. The point of a motion is to ensure that only one idea at a time is before the board for discussion. This maintains an orderly progression for the meeting. Once a vote is taken, that motion may not be reconsidered in the same meeting.

Public Participation

An important consideration for every board meeting is allowing time for members of the public to address the board. This should not be a time of public debate. All members of the board and public should be aware of and abide by the board's public participation policy.

Reference Board Policy: *Public Participation at Board Meetings, po0169.1*

Voting

It's important for every FLSD board member to be familiar with the legal rules relating to voting. In most cases, a simple majority is sufficient to carry a motion provided a legal quorum is in attendance, but in some instances, that is not sufficient. RC 3313.18 specifies that the following items require a majority vote of all members for passage:

- to adopt a resolution authorizing the purchase or sale of real or personal property;
- to employ a superintendent, treasurer, teacher or other employee;
- to elect or appoint an officer;
- to pay any debt or claim; and
- to adopt any textbook.

It is the professional responsibility of each member to vote. However, in some instances, abstention, or the removal of oneself from the voting, may be required by law. For instance, a board member may not vote or participate in the making of a contract of a teacher if the board member is related to the individual under consideration as father, brother, mother, or sister (RC 3319.21). Members are also forbidden under RC 2921.42 to secure approval of an individual contract with his or her spouse. RC 3313.33 prohibits a board member from having any pecuniary interest either directly or indirectly in any contract of the board.

There are exceptions to these general rules. In cases where there is a question about voting, it is important to consult the board's attorney and/or to have discussions with fellow board members. OSBA's Fact Sheet: Voting Makes a Difference.

Sunshine Law and Public Records

Ohio's Sunshine Law

Ohio's Sunshine Law (RC 121.22) requires that all acts and most deliberations of boards of education and other public bodies, as well as their committees and subcommittees, be conducted in public. The board must provide notice of when those meetings will occur and keep minutes of the proceedings.

Reference Board Policy: *Open Meetings/Sunshine Law,* **po0169.2**

What Board Members Need to Know

As a board member, it is important to remember that if a majority of the board (three members) is assembled and discussing public school business, this is construed as a board meeting and is subject to the Sunshine Law. The law allows for a majority of board members to be present at any non-board meeting (such as a district booster meeting) without this same notice if they are observers and not engaging in any board-related discussion.

Executive Sessions

The rules of executive session are clearly stated in the Sunshine Law and discussed earlier in this handbook. In order for a board to enter into executive session, there must be a motion, second and roll call vote. The

purpose or purposes of the session must be stated in the motion and while in session those are to be the only topic of discussion. No official action or vote may be taken in executive session. Each board member is expected to observe strict confidentiality regarding any executive session discussion. Sharing executive session content outside of session is a sign of poor boardmanship and in some cases may cause a legal liability.

RC 121.22 provides specific wording for each executive session topic, which should be used in the actual motion.

Board Committees

All committees of the board are subject to the Sunshine Law and public notice requirements. Any committee that operates as a subset of the board is required to keep minutes and must comply with the provisions of the Sunshine Laws whether or not a board member is present at the meeting.

Penalties for Violation of the Sunshine Law

The Sunshine Law makes it clear that any board action is invalid if the board violated any of the notice provisions of the law. A court may issue an injunction, compelling members of the board, committee or subcommittee to comply with the Sunshine Law. If the court issues an injunction, it is required to assess a civil penalty of $500 against the board, committee or subcommittee and require that entity to pay all court costs.

An individual board member who knowingly violates an injunction granted by a court may be removed from office.

Public Records Law

Like the Open Meeting Law, the Public Records Law requires public offices to keep and make available for inspection and copying records pertaining to school business. In Finneytown, the treasurer is responsible for keeping all records and complying with public record requests. Any member of the public may make a request, but must follow the board's public records request policy.

It is important to remember that under RC 1306.01, any document, device, or item, regardless of physical form or characteristic, including an electronic record which serves to document the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities of the office are deemed public records. This may include emails or text messages.

Reference Board Policy: *Public Records,* **po8310**

Levies and Bond Issues

What is a tax levy?

Boards of education may propose additional local revenues in the form of a specific tax by a board resolution. School districts can place a levy on the ballot up to three times a year on specific election dates. If a majority of voters who vote on the issue approve the tax, county officials charge and collect the tax under the terms specified in the tax levy proposal. The funds collected are then disbursed to the district. When a levy is placed on the ballot, it must identify as its objective a legally defined school district purpose. Permissible uses for a tax levy depend on the type of levy, but may include:

- Operating expenses
- General ongoing improvements
- Specific permanent improvements

- Purchase of educational technology
- Debt service for bonds issued for school construction

Common Types of School Tax Levies

General Levy

A property tax used for any school district purpose, but primarily for either operating expenses or permanent improvement funding. General levies used to provide operating funds are commonly known as operating levies, while those used for permanent improvements can be known as permanent improvement or PI levies. Boards of education propose levies as a specific dollar amount of new revenue. The county auditor, who determines the actual millage necessary to produce the dollar amount, reviews that proposal.

Emergency Levy

A property tax that serves as a limited operating levy (maximum of five years) proposed for a specific dollar amount. Because the dollar amount of taxes charged by the levy must stay constant, the millage rate increases or decreases as property values change. (Note: The millage of a general levy proposed for a specific dollar amount cannot be raised beyond the voted amount, while the millage of an emergency levy can.) Emergency levies may be renewed for the dollar amount originally requested.

Bond Levy or Bond Issue

A property tax levy used to provide a school district with local revenue for construction purposes. The county auditor determines the rate of a bond levy needed each year to service the principal and interest owed on the amount of the bonded debt approved by voters when they approved the bond levy. Bond levies remain in place until the debt (principal and interest) is fully paid, typically 20 or more years.

Dual Purpose Levy

Single ballot issues for both a PI levy or bond issue combined with an operating levy. The issue may be continuing or limited. A PI/operating levy may be either a property tax or a school district income tax, but a bond/operating levy must be a property tax. The board, at the time it seeks the ballot issue, must state how much of the tax levy will be used for each purpose.

Incremental Levy

A property tax phased in for the full amount of the millage increase. It is also commonly known as a phased-in levy. It is a limited levy, with a maximum term of 10 years. Unlike an operating levy, an incremental levy imposes additional millage on a regular schedule throughout the life of the levy. The advantage is that the increments are imposed as the full voted millage, not as effective millage, meaning there is a limited amount of growth allowed in the levy. Up to five changes may be proposed during the life of the levy. The changes may be implemented as a dollar amount, a millage rate change or a change in the percentage of the millage imposed.

Growth Levy

A property tax levy that is designed to compensate for reductions in state funding caused by appreciation in real estate values. The growth on that amount cannot exceed 4% per year. Since the property value increase is phased in over three years, the amount that can be raised by the levy is only based on one-third of the total increase in value. For example, if a district passes the levy and assessed property values for existing property increase from $100 million to $115 million, the levy will generate an additional $115,000 (23 mills times one-third of the increase of $15 million, which equals one mill of tax). In the second year of the levy, the revenue raised cannot exceed $119,600 (an increase of 4% over the amount collected in the preceding year, providing an additional 0.04 mills).

What Is a Mill?

The unit of value for expressing the rate of property taxes in Ohio is the mill. A mill is defined as one-tenth of a percent or one-tenth of a cent (0.1 cents) in cash terms. Millage is the factor applied to the assessed value of property to produce tax revenue.

OSBA publishes a fact sheet, Understanding School Levies, and it may be reviewed here: https://www.ohioschoolboards.org/sites/default/files/OSBAUnderstandingLeviesFactSheet.pdf

Board of Education Involvement in Levy Campaigns

RC 3315.07 specifically prohibits boards of education from spending public money to support or oppose the passage of a levy or bond issue. RC 9.03 allows boards to use public funds to publish and distribute communications, as long as the purpose behind the communication is to provide information about the school district and not to sway the recipient of the communication.

Under RC 3313.77, a board of education may allow community groups to use its facilities for auxiliary, educational, recreational, cultural, civic, social, religious or other board-approved purposes that promote the welfare of the community.

Under the Equal Protection Clause and the First Amendment, a school district may not grant the use of its facilities to people whose views it finds acceptable, but deny use to those wishing to express less favored or more controversial views.

Appendices

District Policy Manual

https://go.neola.com/finlsd-oh/policy

Glossary of Educational Acronyms

Following are some of the many abbreviations commonly used among educators, but perhaps unfamiliar to board members.

AAA (American Arbitration Association) Aids in resolving disputes outside the court system.

AASA (American Association of School Administrators) Provides a number of services for school administrators, including conducting studies and surveys on educational issues.

AASPA (American Association of School Personnel Administrators) Works to establish acceptable school personnel standards, techniques and practices.

ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union) Protects individual rights set forth in the U.S. Constitution.

ACT (American College Testing Program) Standardized test taken by high school students seeking admission to college.

ACTE (Association for Career and Technical Education) Promotes and improves vocational education in high school, postsecondary and adult education.

ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) Federal law protecting the rights of persons with disabilities.

ADM (average daily membership) The enrollment of students receiving services under the superintendent's supervision.

AERA (American Education Research Association) The major professional organization of educators involved in educational research.

AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labor/Congress of Industrial Organizations) The largest federation of unions in the United States.

AFSA (American Federation of School Administrators) Union for school administrators.

AFSCME (American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees) The largest public employee and health care workers' union in the country.

AFT (American Federation of Teachers) An integral part of the American labor movement and a member affiliate of the AFL-CIO.

AGO (Attorney General's Opinion) Interpretation of a legal question by the Ohio attorney general (OAG), usually at the request of a local or state government official.

AP (Advanced Placement) Test taken by high school students to earn college credit.

ASCA (American School Counselors Association) Promotes the rights and welfare of children and improves professional standards in school counseling.

ASBO (Association of School Business Officials International) Promotes improvement and advancement of school business officials, school board members and others interested in school business management.

ASCD (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development) Supports educators as they develop, evaluate and improve curricula.

BASA (Buckeye Association of School Administrators) A professional association for Ohio's public school administrators.

BCI (Bureau of Criminal Investigation) Investigative arm of the Ohio attorney general's office.

BRF (Bond Retirement Fund) School district fund dedicated to the payment of debt service charges.

BWC (Bureau of Workers' Compensation) State agency that administers worker injury claims.

CBE (competency-based education) State testing program to assess student achievement in grades one through eight.

CCSSO (Council of Chief State School Officers) A nationwide organization of the 58 public school officials who head departments of public education in the U.S. states, territories, D.C., Department of Defense Education Activity, and Bureau of Indian Education.

CGCS (Council of the Great City Schools) Conducts studies of problems shared by urban schools.

CIP (continuous improvement plan)

COBRA (Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1986) Federal law that allows employees to continue to receive health insurance after they leave a school district.

COSBBA (Consortium of State School Boards Associations) Founded by state school boards associations in late 2021, it is a non-partisan, national alliance dedicated to sharing resources and information to support, promote and strengthen state school boards associations as they serve their local school districts and board members.

DOE (U.S. Department of Education) Federal government agency.

ECS (Education Commission of the States) Collects information on laws and standards in education and about administrators, principals and teachers. Also researches state policy issues.

EEOC (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission) Federal agency formed in 1964 to enforce federal laws, making it illegal to discriminate against a job applicant or employee on the basis of race, color, sex (including gender identity, pregnancy and sexual orientation), religion, national origin, age, disability or genetic information.

EL (English learner)

ELA (Education Law Association) Works to improve education by promoting interest in and understanding of the legal framework of education and the rights of students, parents, school boards and school employees.

ERI (early retirement incentives) Programs that provide monetary incentives to school district employees who retire early.

ESC (Educational Service Center) Name given to Ohio county offices of education in 1995.

ESEA (Elementary and Secondary Education Act) The original federal education act enacted in 1965. ESEA was updated in 2002 as the No Child Left Behind Act and reauthorized in 2015 as Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act) The most recent reauthorization of ESEA.

ETS (Educational Testing Service) Provides evaluative instruments, research, and services related to educational testing programs such as the PSAT, SAT, GRE and GMAT. Also conducts the National Assessment of Educational Programs (NAEP).

EV (exempted village school district) Name given to Ohio school districts centered in villages.

FAPE (free appropriate public education) Special education and related services that are provided at public expense without charge.

FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) Federal law that addresses inspection and disclosure of student records.

FLSA (Fair Labor Standards Act) Federal law concerning wages and benefits for school district and other employees.

FMLA (Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993) Federal law that authorizes unpaid leave for employees who are ill, become parents or who must care for sick relatives.

GED (General Education Development test) Test that allows students who did not graduate from high school to obtain an equivalent diploma.

GF (General Fund) School district fund receiving all moneys dedicated to the payment of current operating expenses.

GMAT (Graduate Management Admissions Test) Test taken by college students seeking admission to graduate school in business.

GRE (Graduate Record Examination) Test taken by college students interested in studying for advanced degrees in academic fields.

GRF (General Revenue Fund) Major fund of state government from which services are funded.

HCES (Hamilton County Educational Services)

IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) Federal law passed in 1975 to provide for the education of children with disabilities.

IEL (Institute for Educational Leadership) Coordinates programs at national, state and local levels that are designed to support and enhance the capabilities of educators and policymakers.

IEP (Individualized Education Program) Plan devised by a school district for the education of a child with disabilities.

JVSD (joint vocational school district) Name given to school districts providing career and technical training to public school students and adults.

LAF (OSBA Legal Assistance Fund) Provides supportive assistance to boards of education in cases or controversies of statewide significance, primarily at the appellate level.

LEP (limited English proficient) Students and families for whom English is not the primary language.

LPDC (local professional development committee) Local committee comprised of teachers and administrators which approves professional development plans of educators needed to obtain or retain licensure.

NABSE (National Alliance of Black School Educators) Promotes awareness, professional expertise and commitment among black educators.

NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress) Authorized by Congress, NAEP determines the nation's progress in education.

NAESP (National Association of Elementary School Principals) Sponsors programs designed to teach principals about new curricula and technology, to clarify educational issues and trends, and to inform them of new educational research developments.

NAIS (National Association of Independent Schools) Assists independent elementary and secondary schools to strengthen their programs and more effectively serve their students and families.

NAPE (National Association of Partners in Education) Promotes the value of school volunteer and partnership services.

NASBE (National Association of State Boards of Education) Improves the policymaking skills and leadership abilities of state boards of education.

NASSP (National Association of Secondary School Principals) Conducts activities and events to enhance the effectiveness of middle and high school principals.

NBPTS (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards) Seeks to strengthen the profession of elementary and secondary teaching and thereby raise the quality of education in the U.S.

NCES (National Center for Education Statistics) An agency of the U.S. Department of Education. Collects and disseminates statistics and other data related to education in the U.S.

NCLB (No Child Left Behind Act) 2002 reauthorization of ESEA.

NCSL (National Conference of State Legislators) Works to improve the quality and effectiveness of state legislators.

NEA (National Education Association) A national teacher's union.

NGA (National Governors' Association) Serves as a vehicle through which governors influence the development and implementation of national policy and apply creative leadership to state problems.

NSBA (National School Boards Association) An organization for state school board associations and local school boards. It seeks to improve the leadership and policymaking abilities of board members.

NSPRA (National School Public Relations Association) An association that promotes better public understanding of the objectives, accomplishments and needs of education.

OAC (Ohio Administrative Code) Publication containing rules and regulations of Ohio's executive agencies.

OACBDD (Ohio Association of County Boards of Developmental Disabilities) Ensures the availability of programs, services, and supports that assist eligible individuals with developmental disabilities.

OAESA (Ohio Association of Elementary School Administrators) Promotes quality education and advances elementary school administration.

OAG (Ohio attorney general) Elected official charged with enforcing and administering Ohio's laws.

OAPE (Ohio Association of Professional Educators) Group dedicated to classroom teaching in a nonunion environment.

OAPSE (Ohio Association of Public School Employees) Represents nonteaching public school employees affiliated with AFL-CIO and AFSCME.

OASBO (Ohio Association of School Business Officials) Promotes professional growth and welfare of business officials in schools.

OASCD (Ohio Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development) A statewide professional organization dedicated to improving instructional supervision and curriculum development.

OASSA (Ohio Association of Secondary School Administrators) State association for administrators actively engaged in administration or supervision of secondary or middle school students.

OESCA (Ohio Educational Service Center Association) Group including Ohio's educational service centers, formerly known as county boards of education.

OCRC (Ohio Civil Rights Commission) State agency charged with enforcing anti-discrimination laws in employment and other venues.

OCSBA (Ohio Council of School Board Attorneys) An organization for attorneys who represent or have represented Ohio boards of education.

ODEW (Ohio Department of Education and Workforce) Ohio's state department of education.

OEA (Ohio Education Association) A state teacher's union that promotes the interests of teachers and the improvement of education in Ohio.

OFT (Ohio Federation of Teachers) Works to raise the standards of teaching by securing the conditions essential to the best professional service.

Ohio ACTE (Ohio Association for Career and Technical Education) Promotes and protects vocational education and vocational educators.

OHSAA (Ohio High School Athletic Association) Administers interscholastic sports programs.

OHSPRA (Ohio School Public Relations Association) The state chapter of the national association, OHSPRA members work to improve school public relations.

ORC (Ohio Revised Code) Also referred to as RC.

OSBA (Ohio School Boards Association) Serves Ohio public school board members and the diverse districts they represent through superior service, unwavering advocacy and creative solutions.

OFCC (Ohio Facilities Construction Commission) Provides funding, management oversight and technical assistance in construction and renovation of school facilities.

OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Act) Name given to both state and federal laws that promote workplace safety.

OWE (occupational/work experience programs) School district programs that prepare vocational education students for entry into the workplace.

PDK (Phi Delta Kappa) A professional honorary society for men and women in education.

PERS (Public Employees Retirement System) Provides retirement, disability and survivor benefits to public employees.

PSAT (Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test) Test taken by high school students to prepare for taking the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT).

PTA (Ohio Parent-Teacher Association) Works to promote the health, education and welfare of children and youth.

RC (Revised Code) Also known as the Ohio Revised Code.

SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) Test taken by high school students seeking admission to colleges or universities.

SERB (State Employment Relations Board) Administers and enforces Ohio's public employee collective bargaining law.

SERS School Employees Retirement System.

SDIT (school district income tax) Tax imposed on income of residents by school districts after voter approval.

STRS (State Teachers Retirement System)

ULP (unfair labor practice) Conduct by employers or employees defined as unfair under Ohio's collective bargaining law.

USC (United States Code) Multi-volume compilation of federal laws.