

EDUCATION

U.D. school board holds off on policy change format

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UPPER DARBY » A group of proposed guidelines to change the current policy adoption structure in the Upper Darby School District have been tabled.

The school board at its Tuesday night committee meetings held off on advancing four board operations guidelines to a second reading and adoption at their September board meeting that would allow more initial conversation when introducing new and amended policies. One of the proposals, 005-BOG, also creates a new policy committee that would meet at the same night as the district's two other committees, finance and operations and education and pu-

pil services, on the fourth Tuesday of every month.

The three BOGs that were tabled are 003-BOG-1 (board policy development process), 005-BOG-2 (committee of the whole) and 005-BOG-3 (function of committee of the whole).

The policy adoption timeline would change to start the conversation at the first reading in committee with a presentation and discussion instead of between the first and second readings by the board. Currently, the board does not vote on the first readings of policies at its official business meetings but are included as part of the policy report and the official meeting minutes. At present, policies get a non-vote, non-discussion pass at the first reading, get a discussion at a com-

mittee meeting two weeks after that, and final adoption two weeks later (major changes withholding) at the next board meeting.

The board in committee structure expressed a number of points on the BOGs that included confusion of implementation, the use of the policy committee with the other two committees, and the function of the "compressed" timeline that could change policy adoption to two-week process (first reading at committee meeting and second reading/adoption two weeks later at a board meeting).

"In order for us to do our due diligence and really review policy, policy is key," said board Vice President Ed Brown. "It's important as far as how we govern and things we put in

place for the district. More time is better, I'm not in favor of a compressed timeline to have less time to review things and consider. I'd like to maintain our current timeline."

District resident Tim Kelly said at public comment that he, too, was in favor of having extra time for policy discussion.

"It's opportunity for me to go back to the Home and School Association at Aronimink (Elementary) to talk about if there is something people are aware of," he said. "The current process allows for some time."

The board's pause of the BOGs between its first reading on Aug. 14 and their then-projected second reading and adoption on Sept. 10 is exactly what administration is trying to avoid in

the future.

"The discussion I've understand it to be is that a board meeting you go to a first reading ... there is no discussion on the policy. Administratively our concern is, why are we bringing a policy to the first reading, no discussion happens, go to a committee meeting and we shoot it down?" asked Superintendent Dan McGarry. "A policy committee was going to be formed, as the board had asked, so that we would go to a first reading at a committee meeting and get public input there instead of what happened in the past."

Ironically, district administration's desire to remove any procedural stalemates in moving policy forward is exactly what happened Tuesday night

when the board tabled the BOGs in committee structure during that first public discussion on the items, Members wanted to get more information on the proposals before final adoption. Recent policies that hit a speedbump include the administration of insulin to students and the arming of district security personnel. The insulin policy was adopted at a special voting meeting last year and the armed security has been tabled since October.

McGarry added that the policy committee would meet before the board's other two committees for policy discussion before a first reading "to avoid the idea of the board and public being back and forth not agreeing to what it is."

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