

The notes below were written by the chair of the WLCSC Board of Trustees, Rachel Witt, and sent to the members of the WLCSC board of trustees, the Superintendent of schools, date as noted. They were written as documents to aid collaboration and contain both informative and deliberative items. They are informal communication, written with the sole purpose of information to board members to facilitate individual members' ability to execute the task each were elected to do. They were not written for any form of publication.

Writing of these weekly notes and distribution to the board is voluntary and can be stopped at any time. A school board may decline to distribute information that is deliberative. Deliberative is defined, in part, as expressions of opinion or thoughts that are of a speculative nature, and that are communicated for the purpose of decision making. Nearly all language in these notes exactly fit the description of deliberative.

The Board Chair, in consultation with corporation and board leadership, is releasing these documents, only minimally redacted, as part of our ongoing work for transparency. Names/pronouns are redacted to ensure a first-person voice. Other redacted language could include: Legally protected information, i.e. personnel or student names or reference, deliberative information where release of the information could potentially cause harm to a person or group of persons, or inhibit the ability of the board to conduct the business of the board.

Redacted Text is noted by <Redacted Text>

2.4.23 Chair Notes

As always, these notes are confidential. If you have any item you are interested in more conversation about, please let me know. I will set up a time with you. You are also always welcome to add comments to these notes if you have additional resources that would benefit the board. Rachel

Board/Development - Training

- New Member Mentorship meeting held with member <Redacted Text> 2/2. Superintendent <Redacted Text> and I all participated. Additional mentorship meetings will be scheduled as needed. Member <Redacted Text> questions were included in Superintendent notes to the board this week with a couple of exceptions noted below.
- One additional discussion point from member <Redacted Text> related to who produces the minutes for meetings of the board. After discussion, member <Redacted Text> concerns were not resolved, so I sought out additional information from the ISBA legal counsel. If, after review of this additional information members would like to pursue a change to how we process our board meeting minutes, please let me know. Here it is:

The question:

I have a new board member who believes it is inappropriate that we have the corporation administrative assistant take minutes for our regular meeting. They feel we are not complying with our policy (attached below) and that the elected board secretary should instead be taking minutes during the course of the meeting. Like all other corporations I'm aware of, the board has our school board administrative assistant take those minutes during the meeting, review

and edit those minutes for accuracy using the live stream recording. This is part of their normal job description. Our board secretary (officer) does then review the minutes as a proof reader prior to release to the board in our board packet, prior to vote in a meeting. We follow this process for accuracy, objective reporting, consistent quality, and so our board secretary (officer) can participate without distraction in the meeting. There are no concerns that I'm aware of with the quality or timeliness of our meeting minutes. We have explained this, however our board member's concerns remain. I have told them I will refer this question to you for some insight regarding what is typical, legally and procedurally appropriate regarding the recording of school board meeting minutes. I appreciate any insights you can give us.

*The Answer from <redacted text> General Counsel, Indiana School Boards Association
Indiana law requires the board to designate a board secretary. See IC 20-26-4-1. The only statutory duty assigned to the secretary is the signing of contracts (with either the president or vice-president). See IC 20-26-4-8. The Open-Door Law merely states that memoranda of the meeting shall be taken. The memoranda can be used to create minutes of the meeting. See IC 5-14-1.5-4.*

Your practice of having the administrative assistant take the memoranda that are used to create the minutes is what I believe every board does. We don't have any data on this issue – I can only say that from my 30+ years at ISBA. I believe most don't require the secretary to take the notes in order to allow the board secretary to fully engage in the matters on the board's agenda.

That being said, the board can choose to adopt a policy that defines specific duties to the secretary, including taking the memoranda and then creating the minutes for the entire board to review and adopt.

Please let me know if you need anything further.

- Member <Redacted Text> also had a lingering question after mentorship regarding the use of email “reply to all” by members to communicate with each other. To reiterate the process we use currently, e-mail is acceptable for general communication of logistical information. E-mail is also necessary at times for communication between members when there is a time sensitive issue that members should be aware of prior to release of weekly notes. The general practice for our board is if one member knows it, all members should know it. (I will go further and say that if I know it, our Superintendent knows it and vice versa.) The other reason this is important is that communications via email can be requested via public records request, but they do have to be requested. Those requests (APRA) have to go to legal counsel for redaction and that redaction has to be done on the full file, which means every time the message is “replied to all” it copies the full thread. One email that seems simple, can result in pages of duplicate text for redaction. A more transparent process that we have followed for the past year is to place those questions in these notes and then minimally redact and publish these notes proactively to our community. This also has the benefit of members being able to refer to historical information in chronological order. I also offer you this article from ISBA in 2020 with regard to email use by school board members:

https://www.isba-ind.org/uploads/1/1/9/2/119210664/general_counsel_update_lisa_tanselle_w20.pdf

- Thank you to those who registered for sessions on the 2/10 Professional Development day.

Meetings of the Board

- Work Session held 2/1 as an additional work session date. Member <Redacted Text> had a question about releasing the working list we used for our discussion that she sent out via email. Here is text from response:

As I mentioned in my email prior to the work session and again at the work session, this item will appear on the agenda for our February meeting. This allows us to make the information public, gives a forum for individual members to speak on the issue and allows us to submit the document as part of the meeting documents. This level of transparency is important. Work session has no minutes kept, so if we just post this document, we are doing so without much in the way of explanation and that, historically, has been of limited help to our community.

- Reminder. Save the Date for the WLSEF Scarlet & Gray dinner 4/22/23
- Next regular meeting is scheduled for 2/13, 6:30 PM. Agenda is in draft and is anticipated for release on Wednesday this week with questions due by noon on Friday.
- We will NOT be holding our 2/22 work session. 2/1 will replace it.

Community/Patron Feedback

- None this week

General Business

- In our work session, member <Redacted Text> commented that we had recently switched to the two-reading process for substantially changed and new policy and there have been times where the board has not followed this process. I do not believe this is a new policy. I completed a cursory review of that policy history and it has been in place since I believe at least 1996. I am not aware of any time where the two-reading process has not been followed. It is my recall that this policy is rooted in Indiana Code, question sent to legal counsel (CCHA) for clarification on legal code clarification. If any member has specific policies where they do not believe this process was followed, please feel free to refer those to me and I will ask them to be researched.
- In our work session, member <Redacted Text> shared concern with the posting of Questions & Answers on the corporation website, and suggested that process was in some way serving me personally and/or that I am personally the author of those questions and/or responses. As I indicated in work session, below I have provided details with regard to development of the Q&A questions and answers.

(excerpt from) 10/1 Board Chair notes

- x1 patron with question about the Public Relations account. cc on response to full board.
- x1 patron with a question to me and Superintendent <Redacted Text> about inaccuracy of information on social media, responded with facts and invitation to further questions, cc to <Redacted Text>
- x1 patron, through member <Redacted Text> with question about accuracy of debt information being circulated on social media. He has the lead on response to the patron.

Timeline of work (done by R. Witt) between 10/1 and 10/8 notes

10/3 Board chair discussed with the Superintendent and emailed concept to board officers for review and feedback.

10/4 Board chair provided two examples of what Q&A format could look like using responses already written and sent by board chair in response to patron questions.

Question #1 regarding "slush funds" board chair forwarded to the full board on 9/28 following requesting feedback.

Responses received from members <Redacted Text>. No corrections noted. Question #2 regarding credit card use by the board chair/board. Inquiry came to board chair through member Austin and was verbally responded to, however, was documented in 10/1 board chair notes for benefit of full board and was concluded with a request for any questions. (see above) No further questions were received.

10/4 Board chair worked with Superintendent and corporation tech specialists to determine what was feasible within the current website structure and first two test questions were posted on site.

(excerpt from) 10/8 Board Chair Notes

I continue to receive questions from patrons asking questions as a result of misinformation and speculation being distributed in our community. As you are all aware, this week I began working with our Superintendent to make available on the corporation website some of the questions we are receiving along with the answers given. Please feel free to direct any patrons with questions to the website. From the home page, under "School Board" it's "Community Questions".

NOTE: No further questions were received from any member.

If it is necessary to continue to document this timeline information for every Q&A on the website, I am happy to do so, but as you might imagine, it is a tedious and time-consuming process. By policy, it is one task of the board chair to communicate on behalf of the board. I have made every effort to do so in a way that is open and transparent to our board and our community and ensures that all board members have access to identical and factual information. I have had NO conversation with a patron that is not either copied to the full board or at least referenced in board chair weekly notes so a board member could make further inquiry if desired.

Member <Redacted Text>. kindly read through the board chair notes during the time period in question and tallied the number of times I requested feedback in my notes using language such as "You are also always welcome to add comments to these notes." "We appreciate your feedback" "Please let me know of any concerns".

10/1 4x, 10/8 5x, 10/15 3x, 10/22 6x, 10/29 3x, 11/5 2x, 11/12 2x, 11/19 3x, 12/3 4x, 12/9 3x, 12/17 x5 TOTAL= 40

I cannot require any board member to read and use these chair notes, but I will continue to solicit and welcome feedback.

COMMENT to Chair Notes

- **Rachel Witt**

Feb 4 at 10:08 AM

My apologies. I just realized that I neglected to include in my notes the same day communication regarding location of the work session this week. You all received via email, but here is text for the notes: "With regard to your first question, normally I would answer in my weekly chair notes, but given the work session in question is tonight I'll answer here and then will repeat in chair notes. My apologies

for not specifically addressing the meeting location in my notes previously. It was not an intentional omission. A work session is for the purpose of helping board members to receive information and have open discussion about what would best serve students. I've asked for the work session meeting to be scheduled in the central office conference room to aid our ability to have a constructive conversation where we can see and hear each other with more ease and hopefully will be able to develop our ability to work as a team. As a board with new members and a wide range of opinions, our ability to develop a respectful working relationship, particularly in these early months, is a priority. Unfortunately, we do not have the capability to livestream from central office. The work session is advertised and is open to the public, and does allow for the public to address the board should they desire to do so. Any votes regarding any action would be held in subsequent Regular meetings, which we will continue to hold in the Happy Hollow LGI room, where we do have a livestream option."