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<p>Information Requests By School Committee Members</p>	<p>School Committees are established pursuant to Massachusetts Law and have, therefore, certain statutory powers and authority. School Committee members are charged with the duties and obligations of carrying out the powers of the School Committee consistent with the law. As elected public officials, however, individual School Committee members will feel, from time to time, an obligation to the voters who have elected them to lawfully influence the direction of the School Committee and/or the School Department. Lawful attempts to influence the School Committee policy and direction of the School Department is both appropriate and legitimate and should be encouraged. Policy changes, however, must be enacted by a majority of the School Committee and therefore unless an individual member can persuade a majority of his or her colleagues that policy should be changed, change is unlikely to occur. In order to encourage School Committee members to strive for change and at the same time protect the integrity of the School Department and existing policies of the Committee, individual School Committee members must follow proper practices and procedures as they seek information and lobby their colleagues on the Committee.</p> <p>Because it is the School Committee that is empowered by state law, members of the School Committee have authority only when acting as a Committee legally in session. At the moment a School Committee meeting is adjourned, an individual School Committee member has no more right than any other citizen to influence the School Department or any of its employees or to make demands upon the School Department or any of its employees. The School Committee will not be bound in any way by any statement or action on the part of an individual School Committee member except when such statement or action is the result of specific instructions of the Committee issued during a legally convened meeting. No member of the Committee by virtue of his or her office, will exercise any administrative responsibility with respect to any school or command the services of any school employee.</p> <p>Having this frame work in mind, the right of an individual School Committee member to request information from the school Department should be governed entirely by the Public Records Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, G.L. Chapter 4, Section 7, Clause 26, A through M and Chapter 66, Section 10. The Fair Information Practices Act in Massachusetts requires public agencies to provide copies of existing public records at reasonable cost to any citizen who so requests. The law also provides that the reasonable expense of a search of public records may be charged to the requesting party. The law does not require a public agency to create a record or perform any analysis of existing records for anyone.</p> <p>While it is important that precious time and resources of School Department employees be conserved and focused on the constant improvement of the education of the children of Shrewsbury, there are times when the School Committee acting as a body can and should make demands upon the School Department to furnish information from various records and perform analyses of that information for the Committee's work. To the extent that an individual School Committee member requests information from the School Department that is the subject of a project or inquiry undertaken by the School Committee as a whole, that information should be released to School Committee members and, subject to the exemptions of the Public Record statute, any citizen who may request a copy. Should a request for information by an individual School Committee member pursuant to this paragraph require an inordinate or substantial amount of research and/or staff time to prepare or be unreasonable in scope, that request will be referred to the School Committee for approval before that staff time is expended.</p> <p>Nothing in this policy shall require an employee of the School Department to produce any record or make a copy thereof for any School Committee member, other public official or individual citizen if that request is not in compliance with Massachusetts General Laws governing the release of public records.</p>	
Adopted 10/12/94		