

March 27, 2020

Members of the Sitka School District Board of Education, –

We write today to express concern over the Board's actions in the special meeting held on March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2020. There were several actions that are concerning to SEA members, the most concerning is the violation of Board policy and Alaska statute. Sitka School District Board Policy 9323(a) under the Public Participation heading states:

*"Because the Board has a responsibility to conduct district business in an orderly and efficient way, the following procedures shall regulate public presentations to the Board.*

*1. The Board shall give members of the public an opportunity to address the Board either before or during the Board's consideration of each agenda item."*

*Board Policy 9323(a) also references Alaska Statute 29.20.020 which states:*

*"(a) Meetings of all municipal bodies shall be public as provided in [AS 44.62.310](#). –The governing body shall provide reasonable opportunity for the public to be heard at regular and special meetings."*

In addition to this Board Policy 9322(a) under the heading "Construction of Agenda" states:

*"The School Board president and the Superintendent shall prepare an agenda for each meeting of the Board.*

*(cf. 9121 - Board President)*

*Board members may place any item on the agenda no later than five working days before the scheduled meeting date.*

*All agendas shall include the meeting time and place and a description of each business item to be transacted or discussed. All agendas shall be posted for public review prior to the meeting."*

The agenda for this meeting was not posted for public review in any format as far as we could tell, leaving members of the public no opportunity to prepare comments for agenda items, as required under the previously mentioned state statute.

An additional concern, while within the Board's rights, was the inclusion of a member of the public in your executive session. While SEA truly values the role and partnership of the Sitka Tribe of Alaska in making hiring decisions in our district, in all past processes, this has come in concert with involvement from multiple interested stakeholders from the public, including parents, staff, members of the business community and others. Again, we recognize the right of the board to invite anyone they wish into executive session. However, in light of the other concerning actions limiting public input, the exclusion of other stakeholders degrades trust in the boards actions and process.

President Erickson opened the March 16<sup>th</sup> board meeting with comments centered around the idea of process and trust as part of the Interim Superintendent hiring process. We greatly appreciated this acknowledgement at the time. However, in light of last night's actions these words ring somewhat

hollow, and we are left wondering about the commitment from the Board to transparent process and public input.

SEA has enjoyed a long history of productive collaboration with the Board, working together to ensure the best possible outcome for students. We wish to continue to work in concert with The Board in all aspects of our district. Both parties hold equal responsibility in this process. It is our responsibility to take the directives of the Board and implement them with fidelity for student success. However, the Board must hold its responsibility to follow established policy, in letter and in spirit, and follow state statute for our membership to have confidence in the process. We respectfully ask you from this point forward to adhere strictly to Board policy and Alaska state statute in regards to advertising of meetings, publishing of agendas and allowance of public comment on agenda items. Further, we request clarification on who acts as the Board's parliamentarian, and to ensure this individual is fully trained in the Board's implementation of Roberts Rules of Order. In addition, we would like to request if interested parties from the public are being involved in the Board's executive session decision making process, that the Board involve as inclusive a group of stakeholders from the public as possible. This will build the strongest confidence in the public perception of the legitimacy of the appointment and decision making involved in this very important decision.

Respectfully yours,

[Roxann Gagner](#)

[SEA President](#)

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