

**Bylaw amendments to be proposed at 10/24 SEPAC General Meeting, updated as of 10/23:**

Unifying language throughout to be more inclusive and broad (i.e., general members, or members instead of parents; caregivers used instead of parents)

Retiring of the Treasurer position to ensure compliance with SEPAC and District fiscal policies (retiring the treasurer position was approved unanimously at the 10/24 meeting. This version strikes the treasurer exec board position from the bylaws.)

Clarifying Article VI: Ad-hoc volunteers. New language clarifies roles, appointment and dismissal procedures and length of term

**BY LAWS FOR  
WESTWOOD SPECIAL EDUCATION PARENT ADVISORY COUNCIL  
(SEPAC)**

**ARTICLE I: NAME**

The name of this organization shall be the Westwood Special Education Parent Advisory Council, also known as Westwood SEPAC (hereinafter referred to as “SEPAC”).

**ARTICLE II: Purpose**

The SEPAC receives its statutory authority from the Chapter 71B, Section 3 of the Massachusetts General Laws. This authority is also codified in the Code of Massachusetts Regulations (CMR), 603 CMR 28.07(4). The SEPAC’s business duties include, but are not limited to:

- advising the district on matters that pertain to the education and safety of students with disabilities;
- meeting regularly with school officials; and
- participating in the planning, development, and evaluation of the school district’s special education programs. The mission of the SEPAC is to work for understanding of, respect for, and support of all children with special needs in the community.

To that end, they will work to:

- advise the School Committee on matters that pertain to the education, health and safety of students with disabilities;
- meet regularly with school officials to participate in matters pertaining to the education, health and safety of special needs students, including in the planning, development, implementation, and evaluation of the School Committee’s special education programs;
- assist the district in coordinating the presentation of at least one workshop annually within the school district on the rights of students and their parents and guardians under state and federal special education laws;
- provide educational/informational forums to parents/primary caregivers , educators, students and professionals
- promote communication among families with special needs students and the Westwood Public Schools;
- promote a support network of parents/primary caregivers of children with special needs, and provide the forum to share information and discuss matters of common concern and interest; promote communication between SEPAC members, local, State and National organizations, councils and groups; and
- promote communication and programs within the community to encourage understanding, acceptance and inclusion of special needs children.

## **ARTICLE III: POLICIES**

The Westwood SEPAC shall be non-commercial, non-sectarian and non-partisan. The name of this organization, or the name of any of its members in their official capacities, shall not be used in connection with any commercial concern or any partisan interest, or for any purpose other than the regular work of the organization.

## **ARTICLE IV: MEMBERSHIP**

### **SECTION ONE: General membership**

General membership shall be open to any caregiver with a student on an IEP/504 Plan or with a related concern regarding their student. General membership responsibilities include electing the SEPAC Executive Board (Article V).

### **SECTION TWO: Voting membership**

Voting membership shall be limited to any general member who is a parent or guardian of a student with documented special needs residing in or attending school in Westwood with or without an Individual Education Program (IEP) or Section 504 Plan.

Voting membership responsibilities include: financial decisions, nominating SEPAC Executive Board, and voting on changes to the By-laws (Article XI).

As used in these by-laws, the word "member" means general members, voting members or both, as the context indicates.

## **ARTICLE V: EXECUTIVE BOARD**

**SECTION ONE:** The Executive Board of the SEPAC shall be comprised of a Chair (or two equal Co-Chairs) and a Secretary (or two equal Co-Secretaries). All Executive Board members shall be voting members of the SEPAC, elected per the provisions of Article VII. Officers may, from time to time, delegate any of their duties to another officer.

**SECTION TWO:** The duties of the Executive Board shall include:

### **Co-Chairs**

- Set the agenda for each general meeting.
- Preside at all meetings of the SEPAC.
- Recommend the organization and monitor the function of committees and subcommittees and appoint committee members
- Act as liaison between parents of students with disabilities or suspected disabilities and the Director of Student Support Services, SPED Directors and other SPED administrators.
- Prepare periodic reports for the Special Education Administration regarding SEPAC activities and needs
- Represent and speak on behalf of the SEPAC at meetings of the School Committee
- Make an annual presentation to the School Committee.
- Oversee creation and appropriate distribution of SEPAC informational material.

## **Secretary**

- Maintain an accurate meeting attendance log
- Coordinate the recording of minutes of the SEPAC and its committees.
- Collect and review all correspondence of the SEPAC.
- Conduct hospitality correspondence as necessary.
- Create and post newsletters to various outlets
- Update website as necessary

## **ARTICLE VI: AD HOC INVOLVEMENT**

The Chair(s), with input from the Board, may appoint members to promote the purpose and interest of SEPAC. Involvement shall be on a voluntary basis. The Chair(s), with input from the board, may dismiss individuals from their ad-hoc roles without cause. Co-chairs shall provide input and support to those invited to be:

### **SEPAC Liaisons**

- One or more general members (See Article IV, Section 1) from each elementary, middle, and high school, and including one or more general member parents who have students with an out-of-district placement. Chair(s) may solicit liaison suggestions from school administrators, educators or PTOs as needed
- Disseminate SEPAC information to their respective school communities through the school community's preferred channels
- Strive to build relationships between SEPAC, school administration and the school community
- Liaisons shall serve for the academic year in which they were appointed and then must be reappointed by Chair(s) beginning terms on July 1.

### **Program/Community Outreach Coordinator(s)**

- Participate in determining program schedule, topics, presenters and other information for SEPAC's educational meetings.
- Coordinate logistics for one or more educational programs and parent groups.
- Coordinate program publicity with school liaisons and outside entities as needed.s.
- Create connections with Westwood community organizations with vested interest in the support, education and safety of students with disabilities and special needs.
- Program/Community Outreach Coordinators serve from the time of appointment until the completion of the assigned program, or for one year as outlined in Article VII and then must be reappointed by the Chair(s).

## **ARTICLE VII: VOTING/QUORUM**

A quorum of no less than three (3) voting members must be present to constitute a meeting.

## **ARTICLE VIII: ELECTIONS**

Officers of the SEPAC are elected by the general membership and hold office until June 30th of the following year. Elections shall occur (annually) at the May/June meeting. All voting members, as defined

in Article IV, are eligible to make nominations. If any office becomes vacant, an election for that office shall be held at the next meeting, with term to expire June 30th following the election.

Elections shall be decided by a simple majority vote of the general membership present at the May/June meeting, subject to the presence of a quorum. New officers shall take office July 1st, following their election.

Any officer may resign by delivering a written notice of resignation by mail, in person, or by email to the Director of Student Support Services. Resignation shall be effective immediately upon such delivery unless the resignation is slated to be effective at another time. An officer may be removed with or without cause by vote of the voting members.

The SEPAC will inform the school district of the outcome of the annual elections and the names, addresses and phone numbers of the new board by July 1st of each year.

## **ARTICLE IX: MEETINGS**

Meetings are defined as any SEPAC business meeting or committee meeting at which a quorum is met. The number of meetings to be held each year and the dates of those meetings shall be determined annually by the Executive Board. Meetings are to be held no less than three (3) times per year. Advance notice of any and all meetings and elections will be published/posted with a minimum of 48 hours advance notice. Meetings shall be conducted by the Co-Chairs, who shall set the agenda, determine the length of discussions, recognize participation, and conduct votes of the voting membership as needed.

Voting Members shall make a good faith attempt, whenever possible, to elicit input from the general membership before taking a vote on a particular item.

The SEPAC shall hold an Annual Meeting of the voting members each year for the purpose of electing officers and to vote on any matters as shall be specified in the notice of such meeting.

## **ARTICLE X: CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

Any member of the Executive Board who has a financial, personal, or official interest in, or conflict (or appearance of a conflict) with any matter pending before the SEPAC, of such nature that it prevents or may prevent that member from acting on the matter in an impartial manner, will offer to the Board to voluntarily excuse him/herself and will vacate his seat and refrain from discussion and voting on said item.

## **ARTICLE XI: AMENDMENTS**

These by-laws may be amended by a simple majority of the voting members at a general meeting, but by-law changes may not be voted upon in the same meeting as they are proposed, unless a quorum (as described in Article V) votes unanimously to approve the change.

## **ARTICLE XII: PROCEDURES**

Robert's Rules of Order are the default procedures for this organization.