

Tolland Board of Education
Communication and Outreach (ADHOC) Committee

Minutes – January 16, 2014

Members Present: Karen Moran (Chair), Kathy Gorsky, Alfred Fratoni

Administrators and Staff Present: William D. Guzman, Superintendent

The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m.

The group discussed the purpose of this newly formed committee, and decided that the definition stated in the policy could serve as our goal for the committee. “Communications and Outreach committee is charged with increasing opportunities for two-way communication between the Board of Education and other municipal boards, commissions, and committees as well as the general public at large”.

Mrs. Moran stated that Communication is one of the areas addressed in the district strategic plan and was identified as an area where the district needs to focus.

Mrs. Moran distributed copies of the Glastonbury Public Schools Communication Framework and Plan to show the possibilities and potential of where the committee can aspire to be. She will be contacting the GPS Asst. Superintendent to discuss how they got started and any additional background he could give regarding their committee.

The group identified immediate initiatives for the committee to work on. They are:

General communication with the public (i.e. budget process, etc.) – Mrs. Moran stated that she had started a list of communication vehicles the district should use on a consistent basis to get information out to the public: Post on district website, schools digital backpacks/e-blast, town e-blast, Patch, PTO groups, Friends of Tolland Schools, Friends of Tolland Music, Post announcements at Senior Center, Library and Town Hall.

Community Conversation Grant – Mr. Guzman stated that we were awarded \$2,000 to use for a community conversation on any subject. The funds can be used for a facilitator, supplies, etc. Mrs. Moran stated that she would call Nancy Polk for more direction regarding this grant. Mr. Guzman also stated that board member, Patrick Doyle has some background in conducting these conversations and we could utilize his expertise for some direction as well.

Websites (district and schools) – Mr. Guzman stated that high school students were involved in the original website design, and has been improved. The group discussed focusing on design, continuity, and content. Mr. Guzman stated that he would see if Adam Sher, Director of IT for the district, could attend the committees next

meeting to help answer questions. He also stated that we do not have anyone designated as web master for the district and that the schools each handle their own websites.

Central Calendar on website – The group discussed creating a central calendar on the district website that would include all school events in one place. Mrs. Gorsky stated that there have been issues in the past with coordinating town events, and if there was a way to look in one place this would be easier than going to each school's website. Mr. Guzman stated that events like holidays that are in effect for every school would be duplicated in the list of calendar items and would have to be manually removed so the holiday would only appear once. Adam Sher would also be consulted on this initiative.

District Calendar - Mr. Guzman stated that the district calendar comes to the board in February/March. The Communications committee could help with ways to send out an announcement to the public before the Board hears the second reading of the proposed calendar.

Tolland Schools Newsletter – Mr. Guzman discussed the district newsletter “Inside Tolland Schools” which is mailed to all Tolland residents in Fall, Winter and Spring. He stated that it is written and printed in district. The group discussed looking at the design and content of this newsletter for possible improvements. Mr. Fratoni was charged with looking into ideas for possible redesign. Mrs. Gorsky asked if a high school marketing class could assist with this as part of a project or class instruction. It was also discussed if the district could do something on a more frequent basis via the website and Patch.

Outreach to our Senior Residents – Mrs. Moran stated that the musical directors at the middle school and the high school would both be offering seniors free admission to their dress rehearsals for the spring productions. Mrs. Gorsky stated she would follow up with the musical directors to make sure this is communicated via the Senior Center newsletter. The group also discussed other ways to engage our senior residents in the public schools such as discount admission to sports events, and providing school information in their newsletter. Mrs. Moran stated she could connect with the director of the senior center to offer ways to communicate these suggestions.

Student Recognition Program – Mrs. Moran discussed the possibility of organizing a student recognition program. The group discussed ways students are already recognized in their schools and at Board of Education meetings. Mrs. Gorsky and Mr. Fratoni stated that we should not ask the students to repeat what is already happening in the schools for recognition. Mr. Guzman stated that he would reach out to the administrators to see what they are already doing.

The meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

William D. Guzman:jp
Superintendent of Schools