

COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE MINUTES
December 20.2016

Attendance: Deirdre Burns, Deirdre d'Albertis, Laura Schulkind, Steve Jensen, Joe Phelan.

Following the district's successful Capital Project Referendum, the Communications Committee turned its attention to defining its agenda moving forward. A date was set for a Community Round Table discussion on Friday, Feb 3rd at noon in the District Offices. Representatives from the PTSO, RSF, Culture Connect, and ENTA will be invited to participate in what we expect will be an extended conversation about "Sustaining Dynamic Schools in Rhinebeck."

One of the BOE's five goals for 2016-17 provides us with our point of departure:

Comprehensive District Enrollment Planning: The Board will initiate a study of District enrollment trends and the potential impact on class size, programs and services, and staffing. Honoring its commitment to providing a diversity of opportunities for our students, the Board will identify key issues and develop potential models in response to such trends. The Board also will begin a process of community engagement to support the ongoing work of building a strong future that sustains dynamic schools.

The Community Round Table will initiate this "process of community engagement to support the ongoing work of building a strong future" for Rhinebeck's school system. In many respects, RCSD is at a crossroads. Its programs have never been more robust; student achievement is demonstrable and impressive. Yet our community is changing in ways that may have a profound influence on education in our area. Enrollment is declining in the northeast, New York State, and in Dutchess County. The board is committed to getting out ahead of these trends to begin planning prudently for the future.

As the first stage of a conversation that will grow progressively broader and more inclusive (reaching out to include realtors, members of the business community, and other Rhinebeck associations), on February 3rd we aim to articulate for ourselves both challenges and opportunities. We will consider:

- 1) Changes in the town and village of Rhinebeck that impact the future of the district (economic growth, the housing market, rise of Airbnb properties, an aging population),
- 2) How financial planning for the district is curtailed within the current tax cap environment,
- 3) Enrollment patterns and projections for the immediate future.

The committee views the Round Table as a listening/brainstorming session to solicit input at this early stage. Openness and creativity will be at a premium. Our job is to be stewards of limited tax dollars in a tax cap era: what does the community see as our first priority in allocating resources? How will our decisions be influenced by the larger context of educational policy at the federal level with a new administration in Washington, DC? So too, we want to retain a strong vision of what makes Rhinebeck's schools distinctive: this is a powerful moment to reaffirm the values we hold dear. Creating a pamphlet or brochure to illustrate the many strengths of our district for different constituencies is one tangible step towards that imperative.

The group will meet next on **January 12th at 8 AM in the District Offices**. We will create a succinct agenda for the Round Table conversation at that time.

Respectfully submitted,

Deirdre d'Albertis