

4.1.3

Communications Committee Minutes

September 7, 2017

Present: Stephen Jensen, Joe Phelan; Elizabeth Raum, Jaclyn Savolainen, Laura Schulkind

As this was our first Communications Committee meeting of the school year, we spent some time discussing the general purpose of the committee. Laura noted there were no specific unfinished tasks from last year's committee for us to resume.

Laura outlined key talking points we should aim to convey when we address the open house audiences this month. (See end of minutes.)

Joe noted that one of the topics for discussion for the committee this year will be the question of whether and/or how we want to increase our social media presence as a district. The NYSSBA conference will have a presentation on this topic. Laura and Joe will share what they pick up from the conference to add to our discussion.

Liz mentioned that she Googled school districts with Facebook pages (some had Instagram accounts, too) and reached out to some schools to ask how they manage their social media presence. Joe commented that we need to be cognizant of the human capital required for any such projects. The communications role is primarily shared between Stephen, Joe, and Joe's secretary. Joe has asked the school principals to feed content to him to use for Twitter. The district tried using someone from BOCES but it wasn't a satisfactory arrangement. Liz suggested possibly involving students in social media postings but that would need to be overseen by someone.

Laura said she told Sara Ugolini that the Board would like to have a table at the PTSO picnic on Friday, Sept. 15.

Last year, the committee spoke with Claudia Cooley, Executive Director of the Rhinebeck Chamber of Commerce, about improving community ties to businesses and the town overall. Claudia had expressed a willingness to facilitate joint efforts, so we may ask her to arrange for this committee to meet with a group of local realtors. We would like to ask them what they are hearing from their clients about why they are moving to Rhinebeck or why they might be choosing neighboring towns. We may also ask if they would be interested in having a brochure about the school district to show clients. Stephen shared school district brochures from Hyde Park and South Colonie. We will talk about whether to make one for Rhinebeck.

We also discussed why people may be asking questions (and generating discussion) on Facebook as opposed to approaching teachers or administrators directly or using the "Ask the District" form on the district website. We briefly reviewed some of the roughly 20 questions that have been asked through that vehicle over the last year.

In the recent past, the Board has held three "Coffee with the Board" days (with a morning and evening session each day). **Questions for the full Board:** *Do we want to continue having "Coffee" events this year? If so, how many? Are Board members willing to commit to attending?*

Joe noted these events are better attended when there is a topic up for discussion. Two possible topics we suggest are:

- What are your concerns about the emotional and social wellness of our students?
- What's important to you about our school?

Both of these topics directly relate to Board goals for the year. What should the order be? A third meeting could be about long range planning once we have more information to give people about that process so they can form knowledgeable opinions.

Laura shared an article, "Getting Your School to Speak with One Voice", by Anne OBrien. Edutopia.org, July 31, 2017.

Next meeting, we will discuss the NYSSBA conference and what ideas our members got from it relating to social media and communications in our district.

Respectfully submitted,

Jaclyn Savolainen

Talking Points for Open House Nights

Aim to keep comments as brief as possible while hitting major points.

- Thank the community for passing the budget and supporting our students.
- Highlight some of the district accolades and relate the high school successes to lower grades by pointing out that this is where younger students are headed. Here are some honors to **choose** from:
 - Rhinebeck High School Named to the Washington Post's 2017 List of "America's Most Challenging High Schools" for 6th Consecutive Year
 - New York State Education Department Names Rhinebeck High School a "Reward School" for the 4th Time
 - CLS PE Department Again Wins First Place in NYS APHERD "Get Moving New York" Grant for the Southeastern Zone
 - Safety Efforts Earn Rhinebeck Central School District Utica National's School Safety Excellence Award Again in 2017
 - Again This Year, Rhinebeck High School Named by US News & World Report as One of the State's and the Nation's Best
 - Rhinebeck High School Students in Model U.N. Attended the World Summit of Nobel Peace Laureates in Bogota, Colombia.
- Lay out the three goals for the year:
 - Long range planning
 - Technology integration in the K-12 curriculum
 - Social and emotional wellness of our students
- Invite the public to attend Board meetings (2nd & 4th Tuesdays at 7:30), or to watch recorded meetings on YouTube.
- Point out that parents can use the "Ask the District" feature on our website for their questions. Encourage parents to reach out to their children's teachers and administrators if they have questions. Note that contact information is available on the district website for all Board of Education members.
- Enjoy your evening!