

LYME-OLD LYME SCHOOLS

Regional School District #18

A Private School Experience



in a Public School Setting

Policy and Communications Committee Meeting November 18, 2020

Committee Members Present: Suzanne Thompson, Communications Chair; Martha Shoemaker, Policy Chair; Diane Linderman; Steve Wilson

Administration Present: Ian Neviaser, Superintendent of Schools

Others Present: Bridget Compagno, Director of Communications and Marketing

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. The following agenda items were discussed:

1. Communications Update

Bridget Compagno, Director of Communications and Marketing, gave an update on initiatives currently underway. She thanked the committee members and all involved for their input on the recent edition of the *Focus on Education* newsletter, which will be published soon. The next edition of *Focus* will be tied to the 2021-2022 budget.

Mrs. Compagno reported on the creation of an informational page on the district website regarding the proposed artificial playing surface, which includes an overview; considerations (field usage, water usage, safety, and return on investment); a timeline of school board meetings, forums, and newsletters; and related news coverage. Mrs. Compagno explained that they included nationally recognized studies while remaining neutral on the subject but still supplying information for the community. It was also noted that the video of the public forum on the artificial playing surface is included with the field information on the website.

Mr. Wilson cautioned over trying to address all the questions/concerns on the artificial playing surface topic because of the many different opinions and new studies available on the subject. He recommended limiting the topics to the benefits and risks and how they are minimizing the exposure to risks.

Some other suggestions regarding the communication of the proposed artificial playing surface included:

- That the concerns of the residents living in close proximity to the proposed field be addressed.
- That the affordability/funding of the field be publicized.
- Gathering more information from sports turf specialists.
- Publicizing data on environmental concerns.
- How adding another grass field does not solve the problem for field usage, water shortage, etc.
- The fact that there were two additional playing fields before the high school project (near the bus curve area).
- The percentage of athletes playing fall and spring sports and the number of students in PE classes that would be utilizing the new field – field would benefit a large percentage of the student body.
- Looking at other shoreline towns who have successfully used artificial playing surfaces.
- Being cautious about including studies except from governmental agencies.

Mrs. Compagno reviewed some of the district’s media coverage to date: the reopening of schools; the artificial playing surface; Lyme-Old Lyme High School being a recipient of the 2020 College Success Award from *GreatSchools.org*; teacher of the year and employee of the year; and sporting events. Mrs. Compagno noted that the district receives very positive coverage from *LymeLine.com*.

Discussion followed on communicating of COVID-19 updates/cases to the parents. Mr. Neviasser discussed overkill of information vs. timely, informative communication. He explained factors such as the small number of cases (three thus far in-district); protection of personal information; limiting panic; schools being shut down unnecessarily; calming fears; etc., that he considers when communicating with the community and parents.

Mrs. Compagno gave an update on the tracking of social media metrics (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter) and subjects that seem to be of most interest to the readership. She discussed the goal of engaging students, parents and the community and boosting enrollment, while including a variety of events at all schools with an eye to fairness to all groups, sports, clubs, etc.

The committee discussed the Sustainability Committee’s Trex Challenge (plastic film recycling initiative) and ways to help booster the collections. Some suggestions included reaching out to local businesses for donations of their plastic waste and having additional boxes available around the community for public donations.

2. Policy on Title IX

Mr. Neviasser reported that the district recently received recommended updates to the Title IX Policy from CABA. The interpretation of this policy has changed and districts can be penalized if they don’t respond appropriately. Mr. Neviasser reported that although there are very few of these complaints in-district, the administration and athletic director attend training yearly.

Mr. Neviasser gave recommendations for adjustments on several pages of the recommended policy, mostly so that it was more in-line with district verbiage. The committee also reviewed related administrative regulations. Mr. Neviasser will seek legal counsel on the administrative regulations so as to ascertain what needed to be included. There was consensus over the recommended changes. This policy will have a first reading at the December 2 Board of Education meeting.

There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 7:25 p.m.