


Region 14 Schools

Serving the Towns of Bethlehem and Woodbury

MINUTES

Meeting of the Agriscience Advisory Committee

Region 14 Board of Education

March 9, 2021 at 6:30 pm

****Zoom Meeting Link****

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81308264831?pwd=YzVvNEhlUnN1MWJqV3FEYVd2VVNydz09>

Meeting ID: 813 0826 4831

Passcode: H3r3gb

Present

Karen Kalenauskas, Chair
Jennifer Jedd
Edward Belinsky
Kathleen Gorman
Ray Connors
Eric Birkenberger
Michael Lavoie
Jennifer Ayers

Andrew Zielinski
Marisa Bedron
Carol Ann Brown
Tom DiMarco
George Lyman
David Golembeski
Patricia Paige, BoE Recording Clerk

Call to Order

Karen Kalenauskas called the meeting to order at 6:37 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes dated January 21, 2020 were approved by unanimous consent

Approval of Minutes

Minutes dated January 5, 2021 were approved by unanimous consent

Introductions of members, staff, and stakeholders

N/a

Horsebarn and Additional Accessory Buildings Renovation Discussion

The 1.6 million dollar project includes the horse barn, in door riding arena, storage building and sugar house and is being completed in approximately 3 phases. The first phase was funded by the state with a \$620,000 grant and once plans are completed for the second phase, that too, shall be funded by the state.

The high school building project generated an immense amount of fill and Mike Molzon, the Director of Grounds and Maintenance, made the decision early on to keep the fill onsite to use for the anticipated horse barn project. This would alleviate the need to haul it away, only to then later purchase it for the new project. The cost of repositioning the fill is roughly \$23,000 and was not part of the initial bid. The board, at their last meeting, approved the use of a local contractor to level the site. The project will commence immediately, once the ground has thawed and more suitable weather has arrived.

The plans will be submitted for a local permit and then passed onto Hartford for a final review by the folks at the state. Mr. Belinsky noted that there is a need to establish a subcommittee and asked for assistance from those who may know people in the horse industry who can speak to setting up the building, anticipated supplies, etc.

The greenhouse project was put on hold until the tennis courts were installed. Plans are to build the new greenhouse alongside the existing hydroponic and aquaponics greenhouses; there is need for extra space for outside storage and grow areas. The money for the project was reserved 6 years ago. Currently waiting for the horse barn project to commence; prefer one project at a time; hope to begin the green house next year.

Looking to expand the vet science program, a popular interest of students. The decision was made to use grant money to upgrade the ventilation system, converting the entire classroom into one small animal vet science lab. The project started a few weeks ago. There will be a need for another subcommittee to discuss room set up etc. Looking down the road to establish a doggy daycare and grooming area.

With the barn having an anticipated increase in the number of horses, there will need to be a manure management plan put in place. The manure storage barn will fill quicker with the increased number of animals. Looking for places who may want to take the manure for free with pick up or at a cost with delivery; exploring any option.

Plan to send out a message, as part of the action items, the need for people to take part in several subcommittees.

Grip and Grin Reflection

There were approximately 6 people for each class who provided assistance for the freshman and sophomores. Although the meeting landscape was different from prior years due to Covid, the committee was impressed with the number of student participants.

Members of the committee were asked to contribute feedback. A few had students speak because that tends to be problematic for some, while other students appeared exhausted. Some students expressed a struggle in obtaining a SAE.

This year, the plan is to increase the hour requirements for all students back to what they were prior to Covid and home projects will have increased rigor. If there is still a remote option, an allowance will be made for students to do the at home project if their family is compromised for any reason.

There was a concern that the freshmen, with all the modifications that teachers had to make, had not gotten to the segment on building the resume. It was later stated, that the teachers made sure that the students had them completed.

To allow for more time next year to meet with students, and if there is an option, they will make certain to land on a block day.

Review list of members and assign people to contact

The list of current members as of two years ago was included with the agenda and noted member name, e-mail and town. The list is no longer accurate.

Membership is two-fold; initially should have representation from every sending town and also a representative, within the industry, for each of the subject areas that are taught. The committee needs to start recruiting; find farmers in each town and those within the industry to participate.

The zoom meeting format works best for this group; may offer hybrid to accommodate participants. Committee members would like a list of the sending towns.

Ideas for recruiting were offered with one thought to use the Agriscience teachers during SAE visits. The list needs to be cleaned up and advisory members need to be assigned individuals on the list to contact in order to confirm their membership. The goal is not to remove them without talking to them. This is not an open invitation to the general public, but to only professionals within the industry.

The meeting tonight is the last scheduled meeting of the year, but there may be a need to hold some subcommittee meetings; looking to have a subcommittee meeting for small animal science committee late summer/early fall.

There is a high importance to reach out to individuals now to see who will be available, then to reach out to them again. Teachers on the committee asked for help as they are stretched thin at this time of the year. Folks on the committee were happy to extend a hand, but would like a plan before calling.

Members asked Jenn for a calendar that includes the topics and what subcommittee meetings will be held. This would be beneficial with recruitment. Jenn is looking for input on what should be on the calendar. Required by the state to have 2 meetings per calendar year by the advisory committee, but more are being held.

Need to plan now for the fall. Have to clean up the old membership list, to create a new one.

Retiring Staff Member vs. Budget

The committee moved to a more urgent topic and was introduced to the members by Ed Belinsky. The Board of Education, at their meeting last evening, shared their budget plan. It was noted that there will be a savings in the budget by not replacing George Lyman when he retires at the end of the year.

Ed spoke with the Financial Director and explained that they are not allowed to omit the position from the budget. The district has to supply a ratio of 35 students to one teacher per state statute and state law. They would have to replace at least a portion of his

position. With that, the Finance Director offered an option and would offer .4 position, Ed is hoping for .6.

There are some concerns, however. If the board does not replace George's position, he encouraged the committee members to speak to the Board of Education and/or perhaps having the state in to tell them that are not following the law. It is a very distinct subject teaching position and they do not want to lose the quality of the program. A lot of people will pass over the position because it is not full time. There may be a need to reconvene a special meeting if it becomes an issue. He will keep Karen, as chair of the committee, involved in the process so she can decide whether or not to hold a special meeting.

Every 5 years the advisory committee has a compliance review; however it will not be the typical format this year. It will be an abbreviated format. Ms. Jedd will keep all apprised of the situation.

A committee member has volunteered to send out a master e-mail to everyone on the member list confirming their membership; will send Jenn a rough draft for approval.

Jenn will schedule 3 meeting dates for next year and will apprise everyone; Tuesday evenings at 6:30 p.m. would work best.

Other Business

Public Comment

There was no public comment

Adjourn

A motion was made by Ed Belinsky and seconded by Jenn Jedd to adjourn the meeting at 8:18 p.m.; all in favor; none opposed; motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted by Patricia Paige



Regional School District 14

Recorded and filed subject to Board of Education approval by: Patricia Paige