

Minutes of the FFA Advisory of the Board of Education
Regional School District 14 www.ctreg.org
Tuesday, October 8, 2019

Start: 7:05 pm End: 9:00 pm

In attendance were: Karen Kalenauskas, Tyler Cremeans, Ed Belinsky, Eric Birkenberger, George Lyman, Marisa Bedron, Jennifer Jedd, Liz Webb, Carol Ann Brown, Pam Zmek, Susan Bedron, David Golembeski, Maria Alegi, Sharon Knies, Michael Lavoie, Tom Hunt, Chris Hunt, Cyndi Jaret, Mark Keller, Dan Caron and Natascha Schwartz (sitting in for BOE Clerk, Karen Daley).

Karen Kalenauskas called the meeting to order 7:05pm and had committee members to introduce themselves. Ms. Kalenauskas mentioned that she was happy to see some Alumni members present.

She then asked if there were any changes to the minutes from the April 23, 2019 meeting. Hearing none, Ms. Kalenauskas requested a motion to approve the minutes. Dave Golembeski moved to approve the minutes from April 23, 2019, and seconded by Mark Keller. Motion carried.

FFA Report: The FFA report was given by Chapter Parliamentarian, Matthew Syrotiak. Matt was excited to share some of the activities that the chapter has been involved with since the last meeting. Since the last meeting in April 2019, the chapter has: been present at the Goshen Fair with a milk booth, held a summer FFA meeting, cookout, and new student orientation where they welcomed new students and parents into the program. They sent members and officers to the Bethlehem Fair to help judge tomatoes, eggs, and dairy products. They also set up an informational booth at the Bethlehem Fair. They sent members of the Parli Pro, Vet Science, Dairy Judging, Safe Tractor Operation, and Floriculture CDE teams to the Big E Regional contest. The Tractor Operations team placed 1st, Floriculture placed 2nd, Dairy Judging placed 3rd, Parli Pro team placed 3rd, and Vet Science placed 5th. The chapter also sent members to the Big E for Corsage Day where students were able to educate and make corsages for the public. They also held the Freshmen social where the students were able to get to know one another as well as their officers and lastly, they held the Chapter Tractor Driving competition on October 1st.

The officers have also been busy. They attended the State Association's Chapter Officer Leadership Training day and had a Chapter Officer work week at the end of August to prepare for the upcoming year. They held an Officer Parent Potluck in order to inform parents regarding expectations and responsibilities for the upcoming year. The officers set up four committees which have been meeting weekly: Chapter enhancement, scrapbook, POA, and community service. They held their 1st in-school FFA meeting on September 20th. Three officers were sent to the Dan Logue Memorial Scholarship Dinner to sell raffle tickets and to enter a horseshoe rack into the raffle gift pool.

Matt thanked Litchfield Photography for their amazing officer photos. He advised that the officers are currently working on planning their next in-school meeting on October 18, working with Sophomore Block Officers to ensure their continued success and they have begun working on their Chapter Scrapbook and Program of Activities for this year.

Lastly, he thanked the FFA Advisory committee members for their continued support and mentioned that their successes are due to the committee members' efforts and strong support.

SAE presentation: Riley Ballard presented her SAE on EM Equestrian in Roxbury, CT. Riley advised that she started working at EM Equestrian farm in Roxbury her Freshman year and is responsible in caring for 12 horses. She handles the chores such as cleaning the stalls and watering buckets, to name a few tasks. She mentioned that she helps to run the barn and is happy that her boss has given her the freedom to learn the tasks and work through issues that arise. She advised that although she has to do a lot of problem solving, her boss is there to guide her every step of the way. Riley showed photos of the horses she manages, which range from terminally ill, to dressage competition horses, to retired horses living the good life. When asked what the most challenging part of her days are, she stated it is getting to know each horse and his/her personality, most especially the 4 younger horses.

FFA Parliamentary Procedure Presentation – The Parlipro presentation was cancelled as the students were not able to make it.

Faculty Transition Plan – Mr. Belinsky and Ms. Jedd updated the committee regarding the faculty transition. Mr. Belinsky advised that the jobs have been split; he has taken on the responsibility as Agriscience Director which handles the State grants and recruiting. Ms. Jedd is handling the day-to-day operations as well as preparation for the National convention. She is also in charge of the department head meetings, grade books, and curriculum. She stated that this is a transition year and that they both look forward to taking some bigger steps in the coming years.

AgScience Building Grant Update – Last spring discussed fundraising to help offset costs– was an idea that was floating around. Grant is \$1.1M for entire program. Supplemental grant to come helping to expand the program. Liz was told she needed to raise \$150K. Received a few thousand dollars and will be used appropriately.

Dr. Olzacki arrived at 7:36pm to say a quick hello to thank the advisory committee for their work. He also wanted to share how proud he is of the Agriscience students in how far they have come educationally, in their demeanor, and boasted how talented they are. He thanked the new director of Agriscience, Ed Belinsky for taking on this new endeavor. Dr. Olzacki commented that the region has a wonderful Board of Education and they are keeping open lines of communication and conveying all of the positive things happening within the district to the community. Lastly, he stated that he is looking forward to his second annual trip to Indianapolis with the FFA students to watch them compete and to judge a few competitions himself.

Brochure update approval – Ms. Jedd passed around a copy of the brochure to the committee members and requested feedback. She mentioned that a previous brochure existed, but it needed to be more transparent to potential employers regarding the SAE process and also to showcase the benefit of hiring Region 14 students. She wanted to make it more clear and easier to read. Ideally she would like to have two brochures: one for prospective employers and one for the general public. She asked the committee to think of how these brochures could be distributed to get the word out. Another of Ms. Jedd's goals is to make a guide for parents and students with FAQs which would be an all-encompassing document covering all of the essentials.

Program Steering discussion -

The committee had a roundtable discussion regarding the minimum wage increase and the impact on SAEs. Some potential business would not be able to hire students due to monetary constraints since minimum wage has now increased to \$11.00/hr and will go up in \$1.00 increments for the next few years to reach \$15.00/hr. Ms. Jedd mentioned that the National FFA has alternative SAE programs beyond placement in entrepreneurship. She also stated that we might need to change our mindset regarding teenagers working, as not all 14 year olds are ready for a job. Some students need a little more time to come out of their shell and the volunteering aspect has really helped those students to gain confidence and experience. There is another opportunity which allows students to work unpaid at a business, but has a lot of stipulations and only covers a max of 120hrs/yr. Mr. Belinsky advised that perhaps this could become a future task for this advisory committee. Ms. Jedd strongly suggested that each advisory member contact the legislators/senators to start the conversation to voice their concerns with the wage increases and the importance of students working.

The committee discussed the transition of the advisory members with Shepaug being added to the mix of schools. The committee also discussed the need to be able to have students bussed to their SAE if the site is en route and to be able to present the need for SAE at all sending town BOE meetings. This will give the ability to garner support for SAE and the Agriscience program in order to recruit more heavily. Ms. Kalenauskas shared a document with the committee from past years to gain some insight. Mr. Belinsky will work on putting something together.

The committee discussed what initiatives could be implemented to gain new members and to spread more information about the Agriscience program such as contacting CT Horse and the CT Ag Bulletin.

The committee is considering inviting a representative (Chairperson Laura Miller or Vice Chair Mr. Armbruster) from Shepaug to the next meeting to help with the transition. Shepaug's meeting was held last Wednesday and they are in the process of adopting bylaws, etc. They will need help and Region 14 would be happy to get them the contacts they need. Mr. Belinsky and Ms. Jedd will review the list of advisory members to find who is from what area, and also to ensure that Region 14 has representation from all sending districts at our own meetings.

There was discussion regarding recruiting and numbers due to the redistricting. We are still accepting a full class of students and we did have to turn some away. We are excited to dive deeper into these schools and find ways to reach all of the students and ensure that they know the breadth of our program, and erase the stereotype of being "the farming school".

Alumni Update - The alumni organization gave the committee an update on what they have been doing to support the program. This is a new initiative this year to improve communication between the two groups. There is a plan for the 100th anniversary of the Ellis Clark Regional Agriscience and Technology Program at Nonnewaug High School and former Director Bill Davenport has offered to be in charge of this. As part of the celebration, there will be a tractor pull, farm to table dinner, tours and reception at the Agriscience building to name a few events which will be taking place. The Alumni held a barbeque for the freshman orientation and summer meeting. The Alumni organization has been and continues to be very supportive in such initiatives as giving FFA tumblers to all freshmen, reimbursing the chapter \$50 per student for the Nationals trip, purchasing tassels for graduates as well as FFA books for the freshmen, and they recently donated to help with trick or treat street. The Alumni also provide refreshments for many of our events which is greatly appreciated. For more information regarding Woodbury FFA Friends, Family and Alumni Association, please search for them on Facebook and click "Like".

Other Business -

Ms. Jedd is looking for presenters for the College and Career Fair from 7:00-8:30 in the NHS Cafeteria on October 16th. She asked that an email be sent to her for more information.

Finally, Ms. Jedd thanked all in attendance and stated that the Region appreciates all of the input they have been receiving concerning working with our students and many relevant topics. She went on to say that by holding these meetings, we are able to gain many additional perspectives from the committee members about a variety of issues.

Hearing no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted on behalf of Karen Daley,



Natascha Z. Schwartz

Regional School District 14

Recorded and filed subject to Board of Education approval by: Natascha Z. Schwartz, 10/11/19