

MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC/COMMUNITY RELATIONS COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Region 14 Public/Community Relations Committee was held on Monday, October 20, 2014 at Bethlehem Elementary School, 92 East Street, Bethlehem, CT.

The following members were present: Committee Chair Carol Ann Brown, committee members Maryanne Van Aken and Pam Zmek (7:20 pm); also, Superintendent Anna Cutaia-Leonard, Board member Mike Devine, Director of Instruction Sue Domanico, and clerk Deb Carlton.

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 pm and concluded at 7:25 pm

The committee reviewed the idea of reprinting the informational R14 brochure so that copies can be made available at libraries, senior centers, and realtors. Ms. Domanico suggested determining who the audience is and then decide how many to print. Dr. Cutaia-Leonard asked for a chance to review the document first. She cautioned that the message could be slightly different if the brochure was intended for parents than for community members.

Discussion followed about the date of a welcome reception, as well as how best to plan for refreshments. Ultimately, Sunday, November 2nd was chosen, from 4-6 pm at the NHS LMC. Refreshments will be provided by the committee and/or parents, and the school's culinary department will be asked to leave a coffee set up on Friday afternoon in the LMC.

There was discussion about finding out the concerns of the PTOs, and it was suggested that their leadership be invited to a future meeting. Dr. Cutaia-Leonard believes she should hear of the PTOs' concerns, and agreed that inviting them would be valuable in order to find out how the committee can support their efforts, and to help energize those parent groups.

There was also discussion about the increasing coverage of school events in the local papers and on NEAT TV. Dr. Cutaia-Leonard recommended allowing the faculty member responsible for the TV station direct its programming.

She would also like to more clearly define the purview and purpose of the Public/Community Relations committee and did not feel the agenda reflects it. Ms. Brown understands it to be providing to the public what it wants/needs to know about what is going on in the schools, and advocating for the district's needs to the public. Dr. Cutaia-Leonard asked if a communications survey had been used, and was told it had. The committee will try to locate the results of the most recent one. Ms. Van Aken supports the idea of cultivating the PTOs, which have fallen off in recent years. It is necessary to solicit their help at budget time, but that cannot be the only time we call on them to help promote what we are doing in the schools.

Dr. Cutaia-Leonard felt that once the board has goals beyond the current strategic plan, the PR committee will need to sell this vision. At the core, she said, the committee needs to have a common message so it can go out and sell it.

Mr. Devine agreed; the key will be to develop a message and then consistently deliver it, and there are a variety of ways to do this. There should also be plans of what part of the message will be delivered in September, October, February, etc. and to deliver it in a planful way. He suggested finding communities who are effective in this, and find out how they do it.

Ms. Domanico thought CAFE could be a useful resource for this.

Dr. Cutaia-Leonard suggested the next agenda focus on planning for the delivery of Region 14's message throughout the course of the coming year, and planning for what we will send out and when.

Respectfully Submitted,

Carol Ann Brown

Carol Ann Brown, Chair
Public/Community Relations Committee