AGENDA

Addison Central School District
Communications and Engagement Committee
Committee Meeting
Friday, May 13, 2022, 8:30 am - 9:30 am
208 Charles Avenue, Middlebury, VT & Virtual Connection

Please click the link below to join the webinar:
https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82677594814

A. Call to Order Upon Reaching a Quorum
B. Introductions: Board Members, Administrators and Staff
C. Approve the Agenda
D. Public Comment
E. Recommendation to Approve the Minutes of April 14, 2022
F. Committee Discussion:
    1. Research - Routine Engagement Ideas
    2. Communication & Engagement around FMP Report
    3. Next Board Update: End of June/Early July 2022
G. Other Business
H. Next Committee Meeting Date/Time
I. Adjournment

MINUTES

Addison Central School District
Communications and Engagement Committee
Committee Meeting
Thursday, April 14, 2022, 8:45 am - 9:45 am
208 Charles Avenue, Middlebury, VT & Virtual Connection

In Attendance

Brian Bauer; Joanna Doria; Lindsey Hescock; Mary Heather Noble

Please click the link below to join the webinar:
https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89177885847
Or One tap mobile :
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A. Call to Order Upon Reaching a Quorum

   Meeting called to order at 8:56 a.m.

B. Introductions: Board Members, Administrators and Staff

   Staff: Emily Blistein, Director of Communications

C. Approve the Agenda

   Motion to approve the agenda.

   Move: Joanna Doria Second: Lindsey Hescock Status: Passed

D. Select Committee Chair

   Mary Heather Noble was selected Committee Chair.

   Motion to nominate Mary Heather Noble as Committee Chair.

   Move: Joanna Doria Second: Lindsey Hescock Status: Passed

E. Public Comment

   No public comments.

   Brian Bauer asked how many people usually come to committee meetings, and how many people are getting to participate in these discussions. Mary Heather Noble responded that public participation in committee meetings is pretty infrequent, in part because many committee meetings are on irregular schedules and people need to be paying attention to our website and

calendar. Prior to COVID, committee meetings were not recorded because committee generally met right before regular Board meetings. Public participation in committee meetings seemed to increase with the Facilities Committee, and after COVID when meetings could be held and recorded via Zoom.

Lindsey Hescock brought up the question of continuing with Zoom access to Board and Committee meetings, as well as recording them for public access after the fact. She expressed that Zoom makes it easier for people to access our meetings, and she hopes that we do not continue the practice of having committee meetings right before Board meetings.

F. Recommendation to Approve Minutes of March 11, 2022

Motion to approve minutes from March 11, 2022 meeting. Two abstentions: Joanna Doria and Brian Bauer.

Move: Lindsey Hescock Second: Mary Heather Noble Status: Passed

G. Committee Discussion:

1. Ongoing Committee Work

Mary Heather Noble gave a very brief overview of the Communications & Engagement Committee's regular work -- and asked if all committee members had received the link to the Draft Communications Plan that the committee had put together last year. Joanna Doria found it in her email; Brian Bauer has not yet seen it. Lindsey Hescock was involved in developing it, so is familiar with the plan. The plan outlines some of the systems that have been recommended & put into practice to establish a regular Board Update schedule and process for responding to public inquiries. Mary Heather Noble will also share the instructions for accessing Board voicemails with the group.

Joanna Doria expressed interest in revisiting the practice of holding Board meetings at each school in the future, as had been done prior to COVID. Mary Heather Noble agreed, but noted the difficulty with being able to easily offer Zoom access from each school location. She expects this matter will be discussed at the Board Retreat.

Brian Bauer brought up his concern about the disconnect between Board work and the public -- that even if someone attends our Board meetings, the content is often difficult to understand if you don't have a background in education. It's almost like you need a translator to comprehend the issues being discussed during Board meetings.

Emily Blistein noted that this is an ongoing issue with District communications as well -- that people want to be informed, but can be easily overwhelmed by the content and volume they get. She has been experimenting with different ways and venues for delivering important distilled messaging to get stakeholders the information they want in a way they want to receive it.

Lindsey Hescock observed that public participation in Board meetings is generally more accessible to people with time and resources to cover child care, good internet service, etc. How can we meet people where they're at?

Brian Bauer noted a parallel with how things work in the state legislature, and shared an anecdote about going to participate in the rule making process for water quality regulations here in Vermont, and discovering that to be prepared for the public meeting, he would have had to read a large pile of lengthy documents. We need to be reasonable about giving people ample time and access to materials. He also said that the Board should be clear about how much actual feedback is received and factored into its decisions.

Joanna Doria added two points: 1) Board members each bring expertise in particular areas and can be called upon to utilize their knowledge and networks to help in this area, and 2) she has heard from others that sometimes people are hesitant to participate in the Board's processes and surveys because they think the decisions have already been made.

Lindsey Hescock also brought up the fact that communication and engagement efforts that were put into place were completely disrupted by COVID -- so we are starting from scratch, in a sense.

Brian Bauer wondered if we can learn from how other Districts have tackled this issue of public participation and engagement in Board work -- how we reach the people who should be included, and how the Board fosters a meaningful conversation with the community. We always seem to be bound to the way it's always been done.

Joanna Doria and Emily Blistein both agreed with the point -- how do we identify best practices for our ongoing communications work? Joanna mentioned having a reflection period at Board meetings to allow Board members to respond to, or offer thoughts on public comments given during the meeting. This would ground the public comment period -- this is a practice done in the Burlington School District.

Mary Heather Noble expressed support for having the committee research the way other districts conduct their communications and engagement activities, and suggested that this be included in priority committee work.

2. Communications & Engagement Priorities for 2022

Mary Heather Noble took the conversation re: best practices for ongoing communications & engagement from the first discussion item and suggested this as a priority project. We should consider looking at how other Districts provide regular communications on their Board work, and how they conduct engagement activities around particular topics. She provided as an example MAUSD's practice of creating a sort of "Cliffs Notes" version of their meeting minutes to the community so people understand what was discussed and decided.

Lindsey Hescock cautioned the group about simply adding more work for the committee and the Board -- there is only so much that Board members have the capacity to do. There is also a lot of misunderstanding in the community about what the Board role actually is.

Joanna Doria added that the task is not necessarily doing more, but doing it differently. Mary Heather Noble also reminded the group that we need to continue working within the framework that we are legally obligated to work within -- we may need to just find more creative alternative ways for engagement outside of the Board's regular working meetings (that are dictated by Robert's Rules).

Mary Heather Noble also introduced another Committee Priority: the Facilities Master Plan Report -- the final report will soon be released and the Communications & Engagement committee will be tasked with recommending & implementing strategies to make the content of the report accessible and digestible. We will also need to recommend specific engagement activities to have conversations with the community about where to go from here. Some of this work had been discussed by the prior committee; ideas include: eChat videos to deliver report findings in an interview format, creating audio chapters of report content, holding webinars with report highlights and Q&A time, and hosting informal coffee chats to allow people to talk with Board members about how to move forward.

Brian Bauer and Joanna Doria inquired about the finality of the Facilities Master Plan Report -- and whether feedback will be incorporated. Mary Heather Noble clarified that the report content had been approved by the Board and that the report is being formatted/styled to make it easier to read than a simple manuscript. Brian Bauer expressed concern about not having public input into the report, that the Board is just releasing the report with no feedback. Mary Heather Noble attempted to explain that the report is simply a summary of all the Facilities Master Planning work that had been conducted to date -- it does not provide a final decision; rather is an artifact of what has been done so we can collectively determine how to move forward from here. Joanna Doria contested the idea that no decisions had been made -- no big decisions about school closure, but decisions had been made along the way.

Lindsey Hescock mentioned her need to leave the meeting, so the group focused on scheduling the next meeting. Mary Heather Noble will connect with the Facilities Committee to get more details on what they are expecting from our committee, and will get copies of the latest report draft to the group for that work.

H. Other Business

None.

I. Next Committee Meeting

Next meeting will be held on Friday, May 6th at 8:30 a.m.

J. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 10:12 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Heather Noble, Recorder

Motion to adjourn.

Move: Brian Bauer Second: Mary Heather Noble Status: Passed