

AGENDA



**Addison Central School District
Communications and Engagement Committee
Committee Meeting
Thursday, July 23, 2020, 5:00 pm - 6:30 pm
Virtual Connection**

Virtual Meeting ID: 205 249 5792

<https://zoom.us/j/2052495792?pwd=Y0lsWDJTbkJGZFllRnk3UDJFeThodz09>

Password (if needed) Engage20-21

- A. Call to Order upon Reaching a Quorum
- B. Approve the Agenda
- C. Approve the Minutes of June 30, 2020
- D. Updates:
 - 1. Website
 - 2. Videos
 - 3. Porch Conversations
- E. Other
- F. Next Committee Meeting
- G. Adjournment

MINUTES



**Addison Central School District
Communications and Engagement Committee
Committee Meeting
Tuesday, June 30, 2020, 3:30 pm - 5:00 pm
Virtual Connection**

Remote Attendance

Amy McGlashan; Betty Kafumbe; Jennifer Nueder; Mary Cullinane

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A. Call to Order Upon Reaching a Quorum

Meeting called to order at 3:34 PM by Amy McGlashan.

B. Introductions - Board Members, Administration and Staff

Administration: Peter Burrows

Staff: Erika Garner

Visitors: Amy Mason, Jenny Phelps, Dee B, Julie Berry

C. Approve the Agenda

Approved

D. Approve Minutes of June 2, 2020

Approved

E. Discussion: Committee Name Change

Amy led a discussion on change of Committee name from "Planning & Engagement Committee" to "Communications & Engagement Committee", noting that more recently, the committee has done more work around communications as well as engagement than it has around planning, hence, the new name. The rest of the group seconded the decision.

F. Discussion: Board Webpages

WHAT would be the best way to make information available?

Some of the issues/challenges include:

- Information is not easily accessible
- A lot of the information needs reorganization.
- Currently no clear structure in place to monitor/ update the webpage on a regular ba

sis. Tech dept doesn't oversee the website - the responsibility is more spread out among staff members.

Current systems in place:

- Erika Garner has done a lot of website work.
- Schoolwire (now Blackboard?) - education technology and services company in charge of the main web page design.
- Most of the website maintenance work is shared between staff members.

Considerations/Steps:

- For enhanced accessibility of information, we considered several changes to how it is organized. For instance, have a more organized 'landing page' since it's the first place where stakeholders will most likely land; include updates - communication of a quick narrative of where we are, say, with the Facilities Master Plan,,,
- Need to work directly with *Schoolwire/Blackboard* to re-design the webpage based on our recommendations (content, how we want it to be organized, accessibility of information, visual appeal); also, possibly help us create a system in which we can easily do most of the maintenance/technical work by ourselves.
- Peter will follow up with *Schoolwire/Blackboard* on the aforementioned consideration. Also, to determine how malleable the webpages are if, say, we were to work within the perimeter of schoolwire.
- Maybe hire a web designer to work with Erika, Sharon, or Peter, etc., to "jazzify" it - perhaps think about establishing an organizational process/structure for requesting & approving changes, permissions, updating & maintaining the website, etc...to take the load off of staff members.

G. Discussion: Summer Outreach and Communication Strategy

Whatever information we are planning on getting out, we need to make sure it's accurate, reliable, up-to-date. Erika's help with dissemination has made things easier. Erika and her Action Team have spent some time talking about different types of communication, what makes communication effective, the importance of being precise, direct, & simple; the style of communication; careful use of language; purpose of communication; timing; coordinating across the district who needs to know what, & when, & who's going to communicate it - ensuring that the right people have the right information at the right time; among other factors.

Amy mentioned that the result is creating a system/putting a mechanism in place for more accessible outreach avenues. Erika emphasized that we need to be constantly evaluating what people need to know, around what we're doing, & when they need to know it.

1. Web
2. Video "Interviews"

Video "Interviews"/E-chats

These would be multiple pre-recorded interviews that anyone with a link would have the opportunity to review at their own convenience (& submit questions), and would include conversations with:

- Brittany - to get insights into the financial complexities of educational funding

- Peter B & Victoria J - to get a better understanding of where we are in the Facilities Master Planning process
- TruexCullins - do an in depth presentation of their report and contextualize it. We would ask appropriate questions to help clarify any underlying messages that may have gotten lost during the presentations.
- Caitlin - to talk about the Education benefits of 3-4 school models
- Fall Planning Group - to explain the vision of what school will look like in the fall. (perhaps even before the survey is sent out?)

*Webinar form was brought up, as a possible format to use for the e-chats, that would enable community members to ask/type in questions, allowing the Board to get immediate feedback from the community. However, since the e-chats are not running live, listeners would be able to submit their questions in advance via a google doc or some other method.

3. In-Person/Virtual Meetings (Hosting Porch Chats)

In-Person/Virtual Meetings (Hosting Porch Conversations)

Mary C brought up the idea of Porch Conversations - these are meant to be casual, face to face, interactive conversations between the community and Board members, held at a public gathering place or on someone's front porch. They would bear semblance to the past winter community outreach dialogues, except that these would not be facilitated or held at a local school, and would differ in content, given where we are now and all that has transpired since the last dialogues. Currently, the only opportunity that community members have to share their views is during the "Public Comment" section at Board/Committee meetings, but it does not allow for dialogue - just 'comments'. Holding Porch Conversations would require us to go out into the communities, in-person, and give community members a chance to listen, share their opinions, & engage in thoughtful ways, on difficult issues.

Considerations:

Peter raised a question: "Would the Porch Conversations be entirely open - discussing whatever anyone brings up? Or would having some type of focus/backdrop/introduction be necessary/helpful? Mary compared it to a light that people gather around and we try to illuminate a theme/idea, providing a space for discourse to happen around a particular topic, such as "Where are We?". It could be a combination of all those. Whereas simply listening may be helpful sometimes, it's not as productive in terms of working together to tackle an issue.

Mary suggested that it would be helpful if, as a Board, we have an understanding of "Where are we?" before we can share it. Some important contents to consider would include:

- a. Facts about where we are in the process (consider that we have new data, new variables, COVID-19, etc.)
- b. Expectations with regards to timeline

- c. The need to have an understanding or Continue dialogues at the community level with regards to feedback & prioritization (Porch conversations would come into play here).

Jen raised a concern about choice of topics and prioritization, saying that whereas a topic like the FMP might be on people's minds now and the broader community, to many parents, it might not be a priority, as they might prefer to tackle issues such as "What school is going to look like in the fall for my child, given the COVID-19 situation." If we choose to go into the community to conduct Porch Conversations, we might not be prepared to answer some of the questions around such a topic. We could save this for another time in August.

4. Social Media

Social Media

Continue using the available platforms such as Front Porch Forum & FaceBook to send reminders about upcoming meetings and other updates as necessary.

Concerns:

Jen - as we consider the various forms of updating the community, there's still a possibility that people might misunderstand where we are in terms of current 'hot topics', as evident on some social media platforms. e.g. FMP, return to school (social media rumors vs the truth - without proper guidelines from the appropriate offices). Another example of misconstrued information, even with the right output, followed Mary's detailed message in which she gave an update about where we are. Some parents may have simply misconstrued the information or based their concerns/fears on the Truex Cullins recommendations of the 3 or 4 school model, hence interpreting it as "immediate school closure" and selective placement of students in the remaining schools. How then, can we effectively disseminate information to the community without being misunderstood? misunderstanding where we are... e.g. FMP, social media rumors vs the truth, not reactionary, keep, misconstrued info...

Jen recommended keeping our ears/eyes open to 'what the buzz is on the street & on social media, not as a reactionary move, but as one of many ways to help us identify topics that we need to be communicating or that require clarification.

5. Survey

Jen expressed hesitation to do a survey now, stating that if we were to engage the community in any surveys, we want to make sure that we need their responses & that we are capturing them at the right time.

Peter also mentioned that his team is already working on an important fall survey that focuses on continuity of learning, family position regarding return to school, among others, and that layering another survey on top of that would be too much. Nevertheless, the survey could serve as part of a multi-pronged community engagement strategy (to weigh in) after obtaining information from upcoming

conversations with principals regarding establishing a 3-school model (staffing, space considerations, etc.).

Public Comment (Community perspective):

Jenny Phelps: In response to Jen's concern she agrees that while the topic of the fall return to school is on people's minds, she personally is interested in the FMP and would prefer to have discussions around that topic.

Julie Berry: Agrees that there's anxiety around the Facilities Master Plan and that ideas such as Porch conversations sound great, but she would encourage us to get the basics of communication down or it might be difficult to get people's bandwidth like Amy said. For instance, simple tools that are already available, such as Front Porch Forum (say, if each Board member posted about when the next Board meeting is), or the district's Facebook page, would go a long way toward providing information, as they reach a different population than the Newsletter (which had a lot of good information in it) would. The public would feel like we take engagement seriously and that they're in a better position to engage if they have access to information.

Amy Mason: In Spite of all the creative ideas & energy the board has put in, Amy is worried about people's general bandwidth to show up to meetings, especially when the surge picks up again and people are more concerned about social interaction. What would lead to a really good outcome that the community will feel able to support and collaborate on, & all the things we talked about in early March is that they've been engaged. She feels like the community is taking on too much right now.

*Amy also posted a comment in the chat room:

From *Amy Mason* to Everyone

Something for you all to crunch on: I hear a lot in the community of pushback and curiosity about "what's the true urgency" and "why do we have to be early adopters" of the painful things the state is trying to force on communities—during a pandemic. Is the board 100% convinced that this is a good and necessary path/timing for this district right now and if so please help the community understand that... not just saying "we want to decide things before the state forces our hands."

In response to Amy's concern, Amy McGlashan articulated that the board feels compelled to act now and that part of our challenge is getting out the information explaining our decision to move forward despite the way people are feeling. We would put the invitation out on Front Porch Forum or another outreach method for those who may want to attend, so that those who feel overwhelmed don't have to go.

Jen's thoughts are that since Erika put together a great outline of communication that already includes information such as point persons for FPF updates, we could simply incorporate the new ideas like

Video interviews for now and focus on, say, cleaning up the website, & doing a few things really well instead of many different things in a myriad of ways. She echoed Julie's concern that we're missing the mark on some things like communication, especially in this digital world, so we need to focus on improving these aspects first.

Mary Cullinane concurs with all the opinions but strongly believes that, , regardless of whether 4-5 people attend, the board needs to move out into the community and enable a place for folks to have a conversation; also as a way to demonstrate that we're doing everything we can to engage the community in as many ways as we can. Primarily it would be about where we are now, since we'll be in a different place, with more questions to answer, in about 6 months from now and that would mean having another conversation.

6. Board Talking Points

Closing remarks:

Given the urgency of information that may not be readily understood by all (e.g., the financial aspect, which may have severe implications in about a year's time), it is a good idea to take advantage of outreach means like Front Porch Forum, Social media, newsletter, etc, to get the information out and have conversations.

- Peter & Erika will be collaborating on the Communications System and structures plus the website.
- Mary C. volunteered to work with Erika & Amy on outreach and to help set up the Video chats. Our hope is to get these set up in a month's time, before the next committee meeting.
- Jen & Amy McGlashan will work on revisiting the FPF piece & will review the google doc that Erika put together to follow up with Board member contacts for FPF and send out kind reminders to post meeting dates/times and other updates as necessary.
- Betty will take a look at the FAQ section (under the FMP) on the website and see if any questions need updating.

H. Other

Next committee meeting in a month.

I. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Betty Kafumbe