MINUTES

Addison Central School District
Communications and Engagement Committee
Committee Meeting
Tuesday, April 9, 2024, 4:30 pm - 5:30 pm
208 Charles Avenue, Middlebury VT & Virtual Connection

ACSD District Vision and Mission

OUR VISION
Our vision is for all ACSD students to reach their full learning potential, have a sense of belonging in our schools, and enrich our community and the communities where they live in the future.

OUR MISSION
Our mission is to provide high-quality, equitable, and varied learning environments that inspire a passion for learning and growth among our students.

In-Person Attendance
Mary Heather Noble
Remote Attendance
Ellie Romp; Joanna Doria; Tricia Allen
Not In Attendance
Laura Harthan

A. Call to Order Upon Reaching a Quorum

Meeting called to order at 4:43 p.m.

1. Introductions: Board Members, Administrators and Staff

Others present:

Wendy Baker, incoming Superintendent
Emily Blistein, ACSD Director of Communications

B. Recommendation to Approve the Minutes of February 14, 2024

Minutes approved by 3 Ayes (MHN, ER, and TA). Joanna Doria abstained.

Motion to approve the minutes of February 14, 2024..

Move: Ellie Romp Second: Tricia Allen Status: Passed

C. Public Comment - Agenda Items

No public comment.

D. Committee Discussion:

1. Committee Reorgization

Mary Heather explained that the committee needed to elect a new chair. The group

discussed which members did/did not have interested in serving as chair. Neither Ellie Romp nor Joanna Doria are interested in being chair. Tricia Allen expressed a willingness, if she could receive some assistance, but has a considerable workload by serving on the PAHCC Board and their Policy Committee as well.

Mary Heather expressed a willingness if no one else would do it, but explained that she has served as chair for 3 years and felt it was important to allow someone else to take the helm. The Executive Committee has also expressed a desire to see other members lead committees and not just Board Officers, so others have a role in setting agendas, etc. for Board work.

a. Election of Committee Chair

   Motion to elect Tricia Allen as Chair of the Communications and Engagement Committee.

   Move: Ellie Romp Second: Joanna Doria Status: Passed

b. Election of Minutes Recording

   Motion to designate Mary Heather Noble as the secretary/recorder of committee meeting minutes.

   Move: Tricia Allen Second: Ellie Romp Status: Passed

2. Regular Meeting Schedule

   Mary Heather Noble made a motion to set the committee's regular meeting schedule for 4:30 p.m. on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of every month. Ellie Romp seconded.

   The group discussed the proposed schedule, specifically whether meeting once/month or twice/month was best. Pros & cons of scheduling twice/month and canceling as needed versus scheduling once/month were discussed. The group agreed to start with once/month through summer and increase as workload dictates.

   The committee discussed specific days to meet. Joanna Doria stated that the 2nd Tuesday of the month no longer works for her. The group agreed on the 3rd Tuesday of the month, but will also meet on April 30th per Emily Blistein's suggestion, to specifically discuss opportunities for the Board to express appreciation for educators during Teacher Appreciation Week in early May.

   Mary Heather made a motion to amend her original motion to meet once monthly, at 4:30 p.m. on the 3rd Tuesday of each month. Ellie Romp seconded. Tricia Allen called the vote and the amendment to the original motion passed unanimously.

   Tricia then called the vote on the amended motion to set the committee's regular meeting schedule and it passed unanimously.

3. Review of Committee Charge & Upcoming Work

   Emily Blistein read the Committee's charge/description. Tricia Allen then asked the committee about upcoming work.

   Wendy Baker asked the Committee about how the Committee's work will align with the full Board's governance work. Mary Heather updated the group on the Executive Committee's thoughts: The Board needs to move toward the State's new Board governance standards, so is hoping to begin the process with a presentation to the full Board on what is

required/expected, and then follow with a self-assessment survey. This will help identify the Board's governance priorities, which can then be incorporated into the Board's work plan. Then all committees can see which components of that work plan fall into their scope and incorporate specifics into committee work plans.

Beyond that, Tricia noted the time sensitivity of the Board's next quarterly updates (last one was sent in January 2024, the Board is due to issue a Spring Update in April/May). She also noted committee work around budget season. Mary Heather mentioned the possibility of additional communications/engagement around Strategic Plan implementation, which could happen in early fall after the Board and Implementation Team come together over the summer to align their efforts.

Mary Heather also brought up the need for a regular engagement effort, partially in response to Ellen Whelan-Wuest's observation about the public comment experience at Board meetings, and Mary Heather's desire to create a less formal opportunity/space for people to share their comments & concerns. There was some discussion around this idea as well as the current structure for public comment in regular board meetings, including:

- questions about the need for 2 public comment opportunities in board meetings
- what barriers exist for people to meaningfully engage with the Board
- self assessment of family engagement
- specific ideas, including holding Board office hours, informal gathering before regular board meetings, and/or using C&E Committee meetings as engagement meetings.
- needing to protect Board work time and resisting temptation to turn Board meetings into public meetings.

Wendy Baker noted that as we transition to the Strategic Plan implementation over the next year, we will need to navigate our way between what is Board activity on this front and what is more appropriately District communication & engagement activity with stakeholders. We will need to look at the tool kit and work together to determine who should do what, based on respective roles.

Emily Blistein offered further brainstorming, but noted the challenges around adding more based on the AOE's Family Engagement Toolkit -- we need to pick what works best for our District, and not just add things to add things. What is clear to her is that the manner in which people currently engage (public comment in Board meetings) is too rigid and does damage to the trust/relationship. How can this be adjusted?

Mary Heather agreed that figuring out this nuance is the work of the committee, because it must figure out engagement that works AND protects board work time and keeps the Board in its lane.

Ellie Romp agreed about the failure of current mechanisms for public expression doing damage. People don't feel heard, and people want to address the full board.

Tricia Allen mentioned her recollection that the structure of public comment has been put on the list of topics for the Board Retreat, but in the mean time the committee can develop options/ideas.

Joanna Doria noted that while public comments should necessarily steer board work, they should inform the work of the board.

E. Other Business

Emily Blistein offered to email committee members some thoughts about how the Board could engage with Teacher Appreciation Week. The group will discuss further at the next meeting on April 30th.

Mary Heather Noble informed the Committee that regular checking of Board Voicemails has been moved to the Executive Committee, since it meets more frequently. She and Barb Wilson agreed that this would be a better way to stay accountable to checking and reporting voicemail messages. The Board Clerk/Secretary will check messages and report out at every Executive Committee meeting, so this information will be captured in those minutes.

F. Public Comment - Any topic

No public comment.

G. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 5:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Heather Noble, recorder

Motion to adjourn.

Move: Joanna Doria Second: Ellie Romp Status: Passed

*Public Comment Guidelines:
Public comments are encouraged and welcome at each regular board meeting during the period designated for public comment. Comments are limited to three minutes per person. Citizens will be called to make their statement by the board chair. Public comments regarding personnel, students or legal matters will not be heard by the Board.