

Communications Committee Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, November 17, 2009
5:30 p.m.

COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE
of the Keene Board of Education

Cheshire Career Center Conference Room
Keene High School
43 Arch Street
Keene, NH

Committee Members Present:

Donald Parker, Chair
Carl Panza

Others Present:

Chris Weeks, Public Information Coordinator
Member of the public (1)

Committee Members Absent:

Neil Donegan
Christopher Coates

Board Members Present:

Carter Chamberlin
Kathleen O'Donnell
Carol Brown

Administrators Present:

William Gurney, Co-Superintendent
Wayne Woolridge, Co-Superintendent
Paul Cooper, Director of Human Resources

Chair Donald Parker called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m. There being no quorum present, Chair Parker stated the committee would proceed with discussion items only.

1. **Public Input**

There was no public input.

2. **Approval of Minutes of October 27, 2009**

In the absence of a quorum, the minutes were not approved.

3. **Discussion: How Can We Get More Residents into Our Schools?**

Chair Parker introduced the discussion topic by stating that he would like to keep the discussion open for an additional meeting. The committee has already had a number of conversations about

the use of print media and the use of the website. Mr. Parker credited Mr. Paul Cooper, Director of Human Resources and others for the improvements to the SAU site.

Mr. Parker asked if the district should invite more citizens into our schools and would this be beneficial to the schools and the community.

Mr. Woolridge stated that public support of our schools is valuable. Financially the schools are supported by the taxpayers therefore it behooves the district to invite members of the public into the schools to learn more about the day-to-day business of the schools. Nationwide 70-80% of people think that the education system is not doing well, however the same percentage view their local schools in a favorable light. In the local school attendance area, fewer people have children and grandchildren in the schools and as a consequence it is harder to garner their support.

Mr. Chamberlin stated that it is important to invite the public in to observe the artistic productions taking place.

Mr. Gurney mentioned the services and resources available in a local community through its citizens.

Ms. Brown stated that inviting the public into the schools builds a stronger community connection, that often the schools are viewed as a separate entity from the broader community.

Mr. Gurney noted that approximately 10% of Keene elementary students attend schools other than their neighborhood school due to variances.

Mr. Parker summed up the discussion points to include the following as to why it is important to invite more members of the public into Keene schools:

1. Schools are supported by taxpayers
2. Fewer citizens are visiting schools
3. Labor/resources schools could utilize
4. Community connection
5. Neighborhood schools
6. Boost morale of staff, good for community perception

What are the reasons to come into the schools?

1. Open houses for parents of students attending school – broaden to the wider community.
2. Musicals, drama productions, concerts, art shows, athletic events.
3. Community partnerships, schools serving as opportunity for health and wellness events.

Discussion ensued regarding ways to encourage more citizen participation in the schools and to capitalize on local resources to the benefit of the community and the schools.

The following suggestions resulted from the discussion:

1. Hand out surveys to visitors to determine strengths and willingness to volunteer.
2. Connect with the community via email, RSS feeds, flyers home with students.
3. Community partnerships.
4. Citizen tours led by students who are trained.
5. Cheshire Career Center television broadcast classes could tape vignettes about each elementary school with invitations to specific events, run on Cheshire TV Channel 8 at no cost.

Discussion concluded with Mr. Parker stating that over the next couple of years, financial constraints on the schools and the community will necessitate an even greater need to create a sense of community.

4. **Update on Scanning the Schools** – Ms. Christine Weeks

Ms. Weeks highlighted the following items for inclusion in the December issue of *Scanning the Schools*:

- Exhibit at the Thorne-Sagendorf Gallery featuring an installation by a sculptural artist representing the number of people dying from waterborne illnesses. Art students from Keene schools strung the bottle caps (representing human lives) for the exhibit.
- The Trustees of the Trust Funds for the Keene Board of Education requested publicity regarding a new memorial scholarship fund to recognize individuals who have donated to the fund as well as to encourage future donors. KHS design students are working on a logo for the memorial fund.
- Publication of the dates and meeting locations for upcoming public hearings, etc. relative to the budget process.
- Article on the realignment of the social studies curriculum, the Parent Portal and piloting of Power School to be used for course enrollment at KHS.
- Article on federal stimulus money will also be included.

The issue will go to press on December 17.

Mr. Chamberlin mentioned that the *Sentinel* prints a listing of community events which would be a good place to advertise holiday concerts taking place in the schools earlier in December. Ms. Weeks will provide the *Sentinel* with information for the arts and entertainment section of the paper.

Discussion ensued regarding teacher of the year programs available in the district and the state. Mr. Gurney noted that this year the Keene School District will have an administrator in the running for the state's administrator of the year award.

5. Discuss: Middle School Survey

Mr. Parker shared that community members have approached the board about a survey on the middle school. The mission of the Communications Committee is not to decide what goes in the survey but to help frame the communications, the purpose of the survey, how to distribute and what to do with the results.

Mr. Gurney mentioned that the SAU purchased unlimited use of Survey Monkey for one year (at a cost of \$200).

Discussion ensued regarding the following:

- What do parents like or dislike about the middle school?
- What determines how well a school is doing?
- Who will take the survey?
- What will be done with the results?

Mr. Panza shared that the Exeter School District (SAU 16) is conducting a survey for their strategic planning committee. Ms. Brown felt it would make sense to contact the Exeter School District regarding their process.

Mr. Parker asked the committee to give some thought to the evening's discussion topics prior to the next meeting in December.

6. Other Business

None.

7. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Cathy Dieter, Stenographer