

BOARD OF EDUCATION
Ellington, Connecticut
Communication Committee Meeting Minutes

The Communication Committee of the Ellington Board of Education met on Monday, February 14, 2011 in the School Administration Building.

Attendees:

Administrative Team Members: Stephen Cullinan, Erin McGurk, David Pearson

Board of Education Committee Members: Dan Keune, Tracey Kiff-Judson, James Stoughton

Absent Committee Members: Allison Wilkins, Kristen Picard-Wambolt

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 10:08 AM by Tracey Kiff-Judson.

Agenda Items

- **Review of Messages, Audiences, and Methods for Communication**
 - The group briefly reviewed the existing chart with no additions.
- **Outline Initial Tasks**
 - The group discussed the possibility of using a Total Quality Management approach to the committee versus picking several of the highest priority issues to address immediately. Tracey Kiff-Judson mentioned that Allison Wilkins agreed to discuss tools for quality management at the next meeting.
 - The group agreed that we could pick several high priority issues to address and work in parallel on a quality management approach.
 - Erin McGurk suggested that the timeframe for recruiting is rapidly approaching and that if we wished to influence the materials created for this year, we would need to be working on them now.
 - The group selected the following as the topics to address first:
 - The Education Budget
 - The Building Project
 - A unified “brand” for our School System
- **Create Initial Timeline**
 - The group discussed timelines and initial tasks for each of the three topics selected.
 - Budget
 - Steve Cullinan delineated the following are key dates for the budget process:
 - March 29 – Board of Education presents its budget to the Board of Finance
 - April 12 – Annual Public Hearing
 - April 19 – Board of Finance deliberates the education budget
 - May 10 – Annual Town Budget Meeting, which typically adjourns to referendum and a date for the referendum is set (also some motions such as acceptance of grants are voted on at this meeting)
 - The April 12 public hearing was determined to be an important focus point toward which we could gear communications.
 - Steve Cullinan indicated that the budget information can be posted on the website as soon as it is finalized.
 - The group discussed the available audiences and attendance for public speaking engagements by the Superintendent to address the budget. Typically, the Superintendent offers to speak to various PTO’s and other venues. Typically, one or two groups issue an invitation for the Superintendent to speak. The audience reached is relatively small, and there is a question whether the average citizen/parent will invest an hour to attend such an evening meeting.
 - The group discussed the possibility of targeting communications to certain groups with a specific interest, e.g. Friends of Ellington Music.
 - Dave Pearson suggested that written communication (through newsletters, the website, or other media) might be a more effective way to reach a wider audience in this situation. If we come up

with a “Board [of Education] Bits” article/segment for various venues with hot topics, we might reach a wider audience and hit key points.

- Dan Keune suggested that including a video on the website might effectively capture people’s attention.
- Erin McGurk suggested that we target specific people with a vested interest in the budget and ask them to speak on a particular topic at the budget meeting on April 12. The thought was that if we offered support in crafting a brief message, people might be more willing to speak. Topics might include: the athletic restoration plan, the inclusion of a new music position in the budget, our town’s ranking in per pupil spending, etc.
- Building Project
 - Steve Cullinan outlined short-term and long-term communication needs for the building project.
 - In the immediate term (over the next week or so), there needs to be communication regarding the vote to purchase the additional property near Crystal Lake School. Steve Cullinan will investigate the advocacy rules to determine if sending a message via our messenger system is possible. If so, he will draft a communication on this topic and distribute it through the system. If not, or possibly in addition, informal networks and word of mouth communication through the Board of Education and the PTO’s would be helpful. We need to generate enough support to get the purchase completed, but ultimately the final project will require more urgency in communications.
 - Over the longer term, there will be a need to continue to educate the public on the need for and benefits of the building project.
- Branding
 - Erin McGurk mentioned that the current target date for the launch of the new website is July 1, 2011, and that existing materials are being used for this, including the town logo.
 - The group felt that considering branding as a topic would allow us to generate graphics and other materials that could be used in all other forms of communication.
 - Erin McGurk and Tracey Kiff-Judson had reviewed some other websites to see how they have approached their brand/mission/vision.
 - For the next meeting, the committee agreed to review other sites and consider what resources were needed to “rebrand” Ellington Public Schools.
- Steve Cullinan suggested that it might also be beneficial to have the Board of Education Chairperson draft a letter to the editor thanking the volunteers who helped clear snow from the school roofs. Dan Keune indicated that he has already submitted such letters to the Journal Inquirer and to the Reminder.
- **Old Business**
 - To accommodate committee members’ schedules, the meeting time was adjusted to 9:30 AM for the next meeting, which will take place on Monday, February 28, 2011.
- **New Business**
 - None.

Next Meeting and Adjournment

- A motion was made by Steve Cullinan to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Dan Keune. The motion passed, and the meeting adjourned at 11:14 AM.
- Note: The next meeting date was set for Monday, February 28, 2011; however, this date conflicts with “Art in the Capitol.” A new meeting date of March 7, 2011 at 9:30 AM in the Administrative Office Building will be proposed via email.

Minutes submitted by: _____
Tracey Kiff-Judson, Communication Committee Chairperson