

Newburyport School Committee

Sub-committee on Communications

Minutes of Meeting on October 21 2013

Meeting was called to order by Mr. deKanter at 5:35pm

Attending: Supt. Susan Viccaro, Ms. Audrey McCarthy, Mr. Bruce Menin, Mr. Nicholas deKanter

Agenda item 1: Public Conversation

- Mr. deKanter circulated a list of possible public conversation topics, and mentioned that with Superintendent Viccaro joining the team, we should take a new look at what we had been working with.
- We agreed that Public conversation still had not reached the level of participation or wealth of input we desired
- Superintendent Viccaro questioned whether we had enough time to give the conversation to develop.
- Mr. Menin pointed out that we had voted to start School Committee meetings at 7:30, to give ourselves the time for conversation, but that this had not been implemented. Ms. McCarthy mentioned that Vice-chair Sweeney was reluctant to call the meetings for later given that meetings were still running too late.
- We discussed the purpose of public conversation and agreed on two main purposes:
 - Give community members an opportunity to ask questions, discuss concerns, and share observations.
 - Give the school committee an opportunity to gather public input on specific issues of concern to the districtOur current format/approach is not succeeding on delivering these objectives.
- Supt. Viccaro asked if it made sense to schedule 90 minute sessions, separate from SC meetings to cover some of these issues. Mr. Menin was concerned that we would lose the regular opportunities for interaction with the community if we limited our approach to this type of forum.
- Ms McCarthy suggested that we keep the public conversation time, but position it as SC "Office Hours" when members of the community can access us for all the reasons outlined above. Mr. deKanter mentioned that we might even set up a revolving schedule to cover office hours so that all members don't have to be at all sessions.
- We resolved and unanimously passed to recommend that the school committee "pilot" an approach combining Forums and office hours. Further we selected a list of 5 subjects from which we will ask the SC to choose 3 to organize forums for. These subjects are:
 - Foreign Languages at the Middle School
 - Strengthening STEM and science instruction
 - Building a new culture for the Brown/Bresnahan merger
 - Building a stronger music and arts program
 - District technology plan and direction.

Agenda Item 2: District WebSite

- Supt. Viccaro reported that the City has a new website
- She also mentioned that she wants to take the same development and hosting approach for the school department
- She is looking to secure funding for this effort from outside sources.

Meeting was adjourned at 6:30pm.