



POLICY/COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING

MINUTES

June 19, 2024

Virtual Meeting - 4:00 p.m.

Committee Members: Randall Peach, Chair
Ellen DePinto, Beth Fiore, Jennifer Wolf

Administrative Staff: Dr. Jonathan Hart, Superintendent of Schools
Jason Bohm, SBA/Board Secretary

Guest: Lori Perlow, Communications Consultant (agenda item 1)

Minutes

1. Communications Report

Our meeting began with a presentation by Lori Perlow, the board's communications consultant, about her progress with the district's Communications Action Plan. Ms. Perlow shared a written draft of the Plan, which included the results of the survey that had been distributed to parents, employees and community members, and the results of the focus groups Ms. Perlow conducted. Ms. Perlow mentioned that the focus groups were extremely informative, and gave many suggestions for improvement in the district's communications. Ms. Perlow discussed the goals of the Plan, which are: one, to increase awareness of the district's activities and initiatives; two, utilizing communication methods to ensure clear, consistent and accessible communications across all channels; and three, continuing to build and maintain a positive, inclusive and supportive school culture.

The committee discussed the progress of the Plan and how it would be implemented. Dr. Hart and Ms. Perlow will be meeting this summer to discuss the creation of deadlines for the Plan and who is responsible for implementing each aspect, prior to its launch in September. Ms. Perlow cautioned that it could take up to three years to fully implement the Plan. Dr. Hart mentioned wanting to move forward quickly with transitioning to the SMORE platform for our newsletters, board briefs, and community news.

There was also discussion of the time remaining on Ms. Perlow's contract (Dr. Hart to review), and possibly utilizing her consulting services for referendum work.

2. Strauss Esmay Email

The committee next discussed the response from our policy consultant, Strauss Esmay, to the committee chair's questions. One committee member brought up how the NJSBA provides model policies to participating districts, and whether using NJSBA might be a possible alternative to Strauss Esmay. Dr. Hart said that he would inquire of districts that use NJSBA whether they were happy with their policies, and report back to the committee.

3. Alert 232 (con't) - Managing Equity in Education

- a. Policy 1530 - Equal Employment Opportunities (adjustments made)
- b. Policy 2260 - Equity in School and Classroom Practices (adjustments made)

Next, the committee discussed the revisions to Policy 1530, “Equal Employment Opportunities” and Policy 2260, “Equity in School and Classroom Practices”, which Policies had been discussed by the full board at its last meeting. Dr. Hart stated that he made further revisions to these Policies based on what he felt was the consensus of the board in how to craft policies that were inclusive of all.

In the case of Policy 1530, Dr. Hart customized this Policy from the version given to us by Strauss Esmay, to eliminate language which some committee members felt implied that we had used incorrect hiring practices in the past. For Policy 2260, the policy was further revised to eliminate the phrase “all sexes” and instead provide that there would be no discrimination by our district “based on sex.” Dr. Hart pointed out that our Comprehensive Equity Plan would also have to match any revisions to this Policy.

Three of the four committee members indicated that they supported these changes from what Strauss Esmay had proposed. One member, however, expressed the strong opinion that our district should not deviate from Strauss Esmay’s recommendations, as S.E. is our paid consultant for these matters, and because our policies should exactly match the Code for purposes of the QSAC process. Dr. Hart stated that if changes to our policies did become an issue during the QSAC process, he would have to bring the matter back before the committee.

4. Abolish Policy 5755

It was noted that, because Policy Guides 1523 and 2260 address all of the requirements outlined in Policy Guide 5755, the need for Policy Guide 5755 is eliminated and that Policy can be abolished.

5. Township Publication (FYI)

Dr. Hart mentioned that he had learned from a community member that the Township has approved a magazine-type publication to promote township news. Dr. Hart has reached out to the township administrator for more details, as this would be an opportunity for us to place school communications in the publication.

6. Advocacy: Pension Reform Bill moves forward

Dr. Hart informed the committee that a bill has been moving forward to reform the pension system for educators, in order to promote teacher retention and recruitment.

7. Agenda items: Policy 1530 and Policy 2260; abolish Policy 5755.

8. Next Meeting: set for July 29 at 4:00 p.m.