

Communications Committee Meeting Minutes

August 1, 2023

7:00pm via Zoom

In attendance: David Cantor, Brian Fleischer

1. Bond Referendum communications

Discussion of communications goals in relation to the baseball field renovation project. We discussed that although there was no formal meeting with neighbors, the neighbors' priorities with respect to the trees were definitely understood and were the subject of material thought and deliberation, as were the question of aesthetics and sight lines for neighbors on Champlain and Essex, but had to be balanced with the priorities for the safety of the players. Mr. Cantor shared that he examined the field and took pictures of the hazardous conditions. We discussed the importance of having good information on the health of the large shade trees in question. We discussed potential communications with the Community Advisory Group about the field.

2. Update on Website redesign

Mr. Cantor shared that he has been working with Mr. Graber with respect to planning for the website procurement needs and plans for design and functionality improvements. They are scheduled to meet with Dr. Ponds on August 9 for what will likely be a "go" meeting. We discussed leveraging another district's public RFP for a website vendor as a template that can be tailored to Montclair's needs, rather than needing to re-invent the wheel. We discussed issues around the extension with the current vendor needed to bridge the gap to a new contract.

3. Chain of Command Guide

Mr. Fleischer noted that the Committee had agreed that we wanted to add a Chain of Command notice/graphic to the district website along the lines of the one posted by South Orange Maplewood School District as part of their District->Contact Us page. We agreed that Mr. Cantor would follow up with Dr. Ponds to confirm whether, in view of the recent reorganization in Central Office, we wanted to include the K-5 Director and the 6-12 Director in the recommended escalation path for parents who feel their concerns had not been adequately addressed by the teacher or by school administration. He will also seek Dr. Ponds' blessing to post the Chain of Command notice/graphic to our website.

4. Board Goals/Committee Goal

In view of the absence of other committee members, Mr. Fleischer suggested waiting on trying to come to agreement on or approval of the revised draft Board goal on Communications. Mr. Cantor noted that he would like to facilitate the work of the Committee by being more proactive in sharing information

with the Committee in writing before each meeting, such as a summary of upcoming communications initiatives. Mr. Fleischer shared that the Committee's goals for SY 23-24 should take into account that President Silverstein would like the Communications Committee to play a critical role in the planned Strategic Planning effort. Mr. Cantor agreed.

5. Upcoming Communications Initiatives

Mr. Cantor shared that he has a working document that he will share with the Committee mapping out communications efforts planned for now through September. He is working on a printed mailer to go out to the community, likely shortly before the start of the new school year, printed in both English and Spanish with a link or code to access a translation in other languages as well. The mailer will likely include updates on the facilities bond projects, on the expansion of free preschool, on the Community Schools Health Centers and more.

Mr. Cantor further shared that he wants to enhance the communications planning and coordination for each school's Back to School Night, including but not limited to promoting the Community Schools Health Centers and our collaboration with Essex County Community College around CTE/trades opportunities.

Mr. Cantor also expressed a desire to have a bi-weekly letter from the Superintendent to the community, to conduct an "Environmental Survey" to assess families' perceptions about the greatest needs outside of academics, and to include a listing of social services available to families that could accompany our outreach for completion of free and reduced-price meals applications.

6. New Business

Mr. Cantor and Mr. Fleischer briefly discussed the communications components/concerns around recent developments including the MEA allegations regarding the Business Office and the NAACP Education Committee's outreach and advocacy regarding Amistad Law implementation, monitoring and accountability.

