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Susan Kalt Moreau, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Catherine M. Carbone, Ed.D.
Assistant Superintendent of Schools

The Communication and Community Relations Committee met on Wednesday, October 24, 2018 at 6:30 p.m. in Room 36 at the Board of Education Administration Building, 129 Church Street, Bristol.

Minutes

Present: Jeff Caggiano, Joe Grabowski, Tina Taylor, Jen Dube (alt), Kristen Giantonio, Chris Wilson. Also present: Sarah Mitchell, Kate Carbone, and Sue Moreau

1. Chair Caggiano called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.
2. Approval of the minutes of the April 25, 2018 meeting

On a motion by Tina Taylor, seconded by Joe Grabowski, the minutes from the April 25, 2018 meeting were approved unanimously.

3. Review and discuss draft of the fall newsletter

Sarah Mitchell asked for any suggestions Commissioners may have for articles in the fall newsletter. The deadline for articles to Sarah is November 7th. She has not received many articles.

Commissioner Caggiano suggested that if liaisons have pictures from events they have attended, please forward them to Sarah. She will get more details from school staff. Commissioner Caggiano asked if Sarah has the list of liaisons. She will get it from Susan Everett. The newsletter is distributed using the Observer newspaper reaching about 15,000 residents.

Dr. Moreau shared that Kristen Peck volunteered to be an administrator liaison to the Communications & Community Relations Committee. (Marisa Calvi-Rogers also volunteered – she arrived at 6:40).

4. Communication and Outreach updates

At the last meeting of this committee, Commissioner Caggiano asked that we expand our social media presence. Dr. Carbone shared that the Board's mission statement and core values and vision of the graduate are now present in all of the places that we hold meetings.

Dr. Carbone provided an update on the district's use of social media. A new twitter account has been activated that will launch in 1-2 weeks. Dr. Carbone, Dr. Moreau, Sarah Mitchell and Susan Everett will have access to this account.

5. Equity, Race and Diversity conversation planning

Commissioner Caggiano stated that he has some tough news to deliver. If we are going to stick to Robert's Rules of Order, he is not aware at all about item #5. He stated that this is an important topic, but he needs to approve these things and this was put on the agenda without his knowledge.

6. Public Comment

Joe Hoxha – Bristol resident: Spoke about the topic of white privilege and wants to expand the participants of that conversation. He thinks that proceeding with any plans of how to integrate this in the public schools would be irresponsible if made only by the people sitting at this table.

Commissioner Taylor asked Commissioner Caggiano (Jeff) she thinks that because we took #5 off of the agenda, there is not a clear understanding of what the planning committee is about. She asked if there a way for the Superintendent to speak on what the conversation is about, because it is not about curriculum, it is not about anything in the schools.

Commissioner Caggiano said that anyone can come to him as chair with topics and he's wide open to them. He is open to having a separate meeting. Right now, the committee is in public comment and we will continue with public comment now.

Olga Callender, 108 Georgetown Road, Bristol – I was at a meeting, a gathering a while back where there was a group that came in specifically trying to raise consciousness about race relations and interactions between the various groups and thinks Bristol has quite a history and it isn't good. She recalled when Barack Obama became President and he wanted to speak to all of the boys and girls at the high school about doing their best and staying in school, and she recalls that Bristol of many of the communities said thumbs down. I think that the Superintendent should be allowed to tell why she feels that this is important. She and others met with the Superintendent, the president of the New Britain branch of the NAACP and a couple of others last week and she was very forthcoming. I don't see any reason why she shouldn't be allowed to speak up tonight. This is a great opportunity for us all to be informed.

Commissioner Caggiano said that he does appreciate that and thanked Ms. Callender. He said that knows that it is an important topic. Commissioner Caggiano asked Mrs. Callender where she is from. She said that she was a Bristol resident and a Bristol voter and provided her address.

Commissioner Caggiano asked if anyone else would like to speak. Commissioner Taylor said that she would like to make a motion to place Equity, Race and Diversity on the agenda.

Commissioner Taylor put forth a motion to add Equity, Race and Diversity conversation planning to the agenda that was seconded by Joe Grabowski.

Commissioner Taylor stated that she thinks we need to have a conversation because there are some facts out there that aren't really facts and thinks that will clear up a lot of misconceptions.

Commissioner Grabowski said that the reason he is supporting this. He thinks that "Sue" can give us an overview of what we were thinking going forward. His understanding is that this wasn't about the kids. This is about the community to get a conversation for the community as a whole to become more educated.

Commissioner Dube said that this is coming to the point where this is being politicized. She wants to go on record that she doesn't like this.

Commissioner Caggiano said that this is a very important topic and when things are added to the agenda without a voicemail or text message, it does feel very political to him. He is willing to get together next week and do the same thing and invite everyone back. He apologized to the group and it is his opinion that Commissioner Wilson put forth very strict rules and he is going to follow those rules.

A vote was called on the motion: 'all those in favor' aye (Taylor, Grabowski), Nay (Caggiano).

Chairman Wilson explained that alternates may only vote in the absence of one of the 3 standing members of the committee. Commissioner Caggiano stated that he thinks that according to Robert's Rules of Order, any committee member can vote. A discussion about who can vote followed.

Dr. Moreau shared that what she was going to share was only 30 seconds long. It was not going to be a discussion. She and Dr. Carbone will be meeting with a facilitator who will then work with a planning committee and then there will be a community conversation.

Commissioner Caggiano stated that he wanted to encourage participation and asked for any other comments.

Mike Erosenko, (spelling/address not clear) 40 Walnut Place Bristol – He has a problem with white privilege being taught in the schools because he is in an interracial marriage. He wants all of the Commissioners to know that he has a big problem with teaching white privilege. As a veteran, he will fight them on this.

Tim Cameron, 1565 Stafford Ave. Bristol –He came here to try to understand ‘what is white privilege’? He would like the Board to explain that to him versus American privilege.

Commissioner Caggiano explained that the way these meetings work, there may not be answers given during public comment. He thinks this is an important conversation.

Commissioner Giantonio spoke about disabled individuals being part of any discussion about diversity. Diversity should include all protected classes.

7. Adjournment at 7:04 pm

Respectfully submitted:

Susan Kalt Moreau, Ph.D.