

**BRANFORD BOARD OF EDUCATION
Communication Committee Minutes**

DATE: April 7, 2021

LOCATION: Walsh Intermediate School Cafeteria
185 Damascus Road, Branford, CT

SUBJECT: Communication Committee

ATTENDANCE

HERE	ATTENDEE	AFFILIATION
Y	Meredith Gaffney, Committee Chair	Board of Education
Y	Peter Berdon	Board of Education
N	Joanne Borrus	Board of Education
Y	Cristina Cantu	Board of Education
N	Chad Edgar	Board of Education
Y	Ellen Michaels	Board of Education
Y	Dawn Perrotti	Board of Education
Y	John Prins	Board of Education
Y	Dr. Tim Raynor	Board of Education
Y	Hamlet M. Hernandez, Superintendent	Central Office
Y	Rachel Sexton, Assistant Superintendent	Central Office

Others present: Dr. Richard Young, District Physician, Lee Panagoulis, BHS Principal and Tom Ermini, Athletic Director

BUSINESS ITEMS

ITEM DESCRIPTION

CALL

- 01** Meeting was called to order at 6:36 PM by Committee Chair, Meredith Gaffney.

APPROVE MINUTES

- 02** MOTION (Raynor/Berdon) to approve minutes from the January 6, 2021 and February 17, 2021 Communication Committee meetings.
APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY

MOTION

- 03** MOTION (Raynor/Gaffney) to change the language of agenda Item IV from Public Comments/on Discussion/Update Items to Dialogue with the Community.
APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY

DISCUSSION/UPDATE ITEMS

- 04 A. COVID-19 Cases in BPS Update**
Among the items that Superintendent Hernandez, Assistant Superintendent Sexton, Dr. Richard Young and Tom Ermini discussed were, BPS adult and student COVID-19 cases by week, total cases by level (BHS -80, WIS-75, Elementary-88 and Indian Neck-13), BPS Students by Model (always virtual, temporarily virtual, hybrid and always present), employee vaccination update and also the travel advisory and Spring sport.

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DISCUSSION/UPDATE ITEMS (Continued)

05 B. Communication: Lessons Learned from the Pandemic

Superintendent Hernandez began by saying we have taken time to reflect on the six-week period that was difficult and heard from concerned parents and it was evident in the feedback we received. Our ability to communicate with parents was written and in some people's eyes we fell short. We took a step back and looked at what we could have done better and yes we could have communicated better. We will look into more tools we haven't used in the past for a broader reach. Mr. Hernandez thanked parents for their partnership and stated that in the past a mechanism for us was a parent advisory group that met quarterly. This may be something that we can revisit.

06 C. Walsh Intermediate School (WIS) Project Update

Superintendent Hernandez recapped the amount (\$400,000) it would take to get WIS ready to use in the summer. He stated that the project is on schedule and under budget. However, the pool will not be available until January of next year.

DIALOGUE WITH THE COMMUNITY/PUBLIC COMMENT ON DISCUSSION UPDATE ITEMS

Courtney McCarthy, District parent, asked about the immunization data and whether there would be future days off?

Celia Toche, District parent, thanked the Board for holding this meeting and their effort. Ms. Touche thanked Mr. Hernandez for the lessons learned report. Ms. Touche also spoke about effective communication, the use of many channels, surveys the opportunity to talk live, sending emails with letters attached and considering project based learning for summer school.

Gregg Jerolman, Branford resident, spoke about the Board's effort to do the right thing, disingenuousness, lessons learned, Pareto's law, the efforts of some of the Board members, communication issues, the effort of parents, looking at the big picture and strategic issues.

Laura Green, District parent and employee, spoke about public criticism of Superintendent Hernandez, observing a positive interaction with Mr. Hernandez and a fourth grade, his care for students, BOE policy and transparency.

Megan Delucia, District parent, asked about staff vaccination numbers and VAMS, student allergy symptoms and staying home and also COVID testing.

Derek Green, District parent, spoke about communication and meeting video delay. Mr. Green also stated that he was thankful for our kids to be back in school.

Jennifer Orlando, District parent, thanked the Board for having this meeting, for opening it up and changing the forum. Ms. Orlando also discussed her disappointment with the agenda, suggestions from the community, making improvements, the Hornets Nation Facebook page and District policies.

Laura Green, District parent, spoke about CAFE guidance versus regulation, transparency, Mr. Prins and Board business, changing practices and denying the hearing.

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DIALOGUE WITH THE COMMUNITY/PUBLIC COMMENT ON DISCUSSION UPDATE ITEMS

(Continued)

Becky Gillman, District parent, thanked the Board for having this evenings meeting and allowing community discussion. Ms. Gillman spoke about lessons learned, communication and transparency, emails sent regarding Indian Neck School, a request for COVID-19 guidelines and quarantining.

Kate Marsland, Branford Resident, spoke about the position of dialogue on the agenda, administration and Board Chair conduct, the transparent and dyadic approach of the Board, public comment and participation, CABA guidelines, Board Bylaws, summer learning and agenda items submitted by parents.

Jenn Alexander, District parent, thanked the Board for the opportunity to begin dialogue and commended the security staff at WIS. Ms. Alexander discussed meeting guidelines and interaction with the public, creating parent committees, screening students upon returning from break, federal stimulus resources and transparency.

Gregg Jerolman, Branford resident, spoke about today's callers, the ideas presented and Mr. Prins' comments.

ADJOURNMENT

03 MOTION (Berdon/Raynor) to adjourn.
APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY

Ms. Gaffney adjourned the meeting at 8:58 PM.

The next Communication Committee Meeting will be held on
May 12, 2021, at 6:30 PM at Walsh Intermediate School Cafeteria

Respectfully submitted,
Meredith Gaffney
Secretary

Prepared by,
Kerry Eyrich