

**BRANFORD BOARD OF EDUCATION
Communication Committee Minutes**

DATE: September 22, 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
N	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
Y	Don Neel, Chief Operating Officer	Central Office

Others present:

BUSINESS ITEMS

ITEM DESCRIPTION

CALL

01 Meeting was called to order at 8:05 PM by Committee Chair, Meredith Gaffney.

APPROVE MINUTES

02 MOTION (Berdon/Raynor) to approve the minutes from the June 9, 2021 Communication Committee Meeting.

APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY

03 MOTION (Berdon/Perrotti) to approve the minutes from the August 19, 2021 Special Communication Committee meeting.

APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY

DISCUSSION/UPDATE ITEMS

04 A. COVID-19 Update/Governors Vaccination Mandate

Among the items that Superintendent Hernandez discussed were; the COVID Dashboard (changed view, numbers have not changed since last week, numbers only reflect Branford Public School students), DPH information on students 18 and under, vaccination numbers, students and staff doing a phenomenal job with social distancing and safety, creating a culture of safety, discussions at recently held parent forums, we are heading in the right direction but we need to proceed with safety and the CT WiZ database.

05 B. Walsh Intermediate School (WIS) Project /WIS Field Update

Among the items that Superintendent Hernandez discussed were; the final part of the project (pool), meeting with the State in October to review Change Orders (series of meetings), fields are not eligible for reimbursement, engaging with Antinozzi (programmatic needs – schools/park and rec), funding streams, timeline to be included in budget (Capital), field drainage, and restoring the softball field.

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DISCUSSION/UPDATE ITEMS (Continued)

06 D. Solar Panel Project Update

Superintendent Hernandez discussed the following; adversely being impacted by the supply chain, the timeline we are looking at for completion (April), the level of frustration for things being out of our control, the engineering piece (done), the layout for the solar array for panels and indoor air quality.

07 E. School Opening: Parent Forum

Superintendent Hernandez discussed the following; the Elementary Schools parent forum (35 parents signed up - 25 participated). Mr. Hernandez stated that he found it to be informative and helpful. Among the items discussed during the forum were summer school and the milestones that parents identified related to the opening. Parents were asked - what haven't you seen that you would like to see this school year - among the answers were; lunch rooms and assemblies coming back to school. Superintendent Hernandez stated that the WIS Forum is next Tuesday and the High Schools will be held on the 5th. We will repeat similar forums mid-year and they will be thematic based.

Superintendent Hernandez discussed PTA funding and equity. Mr. Hernandez stated that he has asked Mr. O'Connor to spearhead this and engage the PTA presidents to see how the funding is being used, and to see if they would be open to pooling resources.

PUBLIC COMMENT/DIALOGUE WITH THE COMMUNITY ON DISCUSSION UPDATE ITEMS

Stephanie Ducharme, District parent, discussed her disappointment with the recent meet-the-teacher being virtual. She also spoke about unvaccinated vs. vaccinated and natural immunity.

Jennifer Orlando, District parent, discussed the parent forum, a letter that Superintendent Hernandez sent to staff regarding air conditioning, and her emails.

Jason Simmons, District parent, spoke about computerized medical records, singling out kids for being vaccinated vs. unvaccinated, immunity, COVID-19 and mandates.

Jamie Kovecses, District parent, discussed the importance of student hand washing, providing a portable sink in each classroom and teaching children how to wash their hands. Ms. Kovecses also read an article from the CDC.

Celia Toche, District parent, spoke about the amount of time that the BOE members put in and thanked them for all of their work, openness and communication and for the parent forums. Ms. Toche also spoke about PTA equity, policy power, the ESSER listening sessions and the flexibility of the summer program.

Gregg Jerolman, Branford resident, spoke about public comment consistency, an upcoming Freedom of Information Commission Hearing and the open communication position.

Alima Bryant, District parent, spoke about emails and phone calls that she has placed to the Superintendent, decisions she has made for her child and communication.

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ADJOURNMENT

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

Ms. Gaffney adjourned the meeting at 9:22 PM.

The next Communication Committee Meeting will be held on
October 13, 2021, at 6:30 PM at Walsh Intermediate School Cafeteria

Respectfully submitted,
Meredith Gaffney
Secretary

Prepared by,
Kerry Eyrich