

DRAFT
NOT FINAL UNTIL APPROVED BY BOARD
BURLINGTON BOARD OF SCHOOL COMMISSIONERS
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES

8/26/2018

Attending Board Members: Martine Gulick (co-Chair), Mike Fisher (co-Chair), Keith Pillsbury, Stephen Carey, Liz Curry, Mark Barlow

Guests: Kate Stein, Diane Pawlusiak, Infinite Colcleasure, Sephirah Feinberg, Tracey Dengler, Tyler Doggett, Joanna Grossman

1. Call to order

Commissioner Fisher called the meeting to order at 6:05pm p.m.

2. Approval of Agenda

Agenda approved with no changes

3. Mission of the Community Engagement (CE) Committee

Presentation by co-chairs Gulick and Fisher

4. Public Comment

Tracey - Will we be talking about shared values, back up before “doing”. Specifically talking about Early Education. Looking for an understanding - building a framework as to where we are going

Joanna echoed this sentiment. Who are we? Where do we want to go?

Mike: This applies to issues other than pre-K too. This isn't just the pre-K and capital plan community engagement committee.

Stephen - agrees with “backing up” and doing strategic work with the community

Tracey - you are in a position to engage the teachers, especially around the strategy of consolidating Early Ed; get their input.

Group discussion about the Strategic Plan.

Tracey - Preschool: Need to figure out how the district got to the current plan. What was the process?

Kate - likes the format of public comment interspersed into the agenda

Infinite - asked about parent involvement in terms of Title 1 funds - what is the plan for parent involvement for Title 1 funds - this particular funding mechanism - he understands it as their being some basic regulations to how the funds are accessed.

Mike: I will follow up on that.

Liz: Title 1 funds are part of the overall budget, so parents have the opportunity to participate through the budget formation process.

Infinite: believes there are regulations that require low-income families be involved in distribution of those funds

Kate: recalled having to sign a document at PTO meetings related to Title 1 funds

Infinite: Are the results of the climate survey published?

Mike: The survey is closed, but results have not been published for either the schools-focused survey or the district-wide survey.

Joanna - what about engaging the teachers/staff to participate

Mike - we have not discussed that yet

Stephen seconded that notion

Liz - want to measure the performance of the committee via goals, tied to the larger board's goals/policies/strategy. Helps to focus instead of reacting.

Martine - agreed on goals guiding focus. It would be nice to have flexibility though.

Keith - Strategic Plans don't always work. Burlington likes to plan and often it's a smaller group. But when the public votes they don't necessary adhere to those plans.

Tracey - the population is changing. We should step back to understand that before setting Early Ed strategy. From her conversation with Superintendent Obeng, Early Ed will "mushroom", is it enough to add two classrooms?

Keith - Burlington was the first community to offer the 10 hours of preschool. We are on the cutting edge of preschool.

5. Creating a framework

Fisher talks about framework we will use. The "how", not the "what" of actual community engagement. Come up with strategies and tactics, document and create a tool kit - that can be accessed by all board members, board committees, the entire board, and district staff.

Continuum of engagement - inform, involve, collaboration. Each of these are different types of community engagement. Mike gives examples of tactics for each.

6. Public Comment

Stephen - suggests that all our committee work is "collaboration." Curriculum committee is working on reading strategies around the district.

Mike - questions whether we should always be collaborating, suggest that sometimes we need to inform.

Liz - it creates the scaffolding for the board's work. An outcome of the committee could be to see how successful the board was at using this scaffolding...We could get constant feedback about how well we're doing monitoring our goals. Standardize a way to function - and see if it is working.

Mark - use the experts to report out on the information and best practices.

Tracey - when you're stuck, getting community involved can help and inform

Stephen - this committee could be a forum for that

Mike - I think all committees should do that. The CE Committee will build tools that all committees can use. The CE Committee isn't the one place for board community engagement.

Infinite - asked when is it collaboration and when is it not; will there be criteria developed for when to collaborate?

Mike - It's up to committees, Superintendent Obeng and the board to decide on level of engagement, not the CE committee.

Liz - want it to be meaningful, engaging certain people at meetings isn't genuine collaboration.

Mike - We can potentially include in the framework to ensure different populations are engaged.

Kate - finding the target market - the people who are passionate will show up.

Tracey - include things like "text messaging instead of email" "Twitter instead of Facebook"

Mark - this is formalizing things that have been leveraged in the past

Liz - hold community meetings in low-income housing areas

Sephirah - it's important to engage early; getting opinions at the end of the process isn't engagement. The danger of a checkbox approach is feigned engagement.

Martine - agreed, community engagement should be a first thought rather than an afterthought.

7. Community Engagement and Capital Plan

Short Presentation by Co-Chairs Gulick and Fisher on BHS, FY18 Summer projects and current state of Early Education program.

Mike - gives updates on BHS - explains 70 million bond approval. Need approval from city council to get on the ballot in November. All City Councilors who spoke told the board to slow down.

Liz didn't agree that Brian was the only one who was supportive of Nov. ballot. K. Wright said he doesn't like money items in November.

Tracey - is there a reason for that?

Mark - March is town meeting day, traditional day to approve town spending.

Liz - the City Council wants detailed information on the actual building, but we want community support for a new high school. One City Councilor was appalled by the information that was sent to City Council in response to Mayro Weinberg's letter; we need to answer it precisely.

Keith - can't give City Councilors all the answers. We don't want to over promise.

Kate - loves what Liz said. She will ask members of the ReEnvisioning Committee to speak at public comment. What does it hurt to put it on? We are asking the public if they want it.

Liz - bonding requires the full support of City Councilors.

Mike - ended BHS discussion. Reviewed current summer projects [Edmunds C building, SA Playground, Hunt lockers and BTC/BHS elevator replacement]. Reviewed Early Ed update from Director Curtis. Explained that the two new Early Ed buildings are "on hold" as per board's resolution in April.

Group discussion about loss of Act 166 funding; what is it for and Superintendent Obeng's statement that they are looking for alternative funding.

8. Public Comment

Tracey - like the idea of an ad-hoc committee for Early Ed like the ReEnvisioning committee. Different perspective between Early Ed teachers at different sites.

Discussion between Tracey and Liz about experience of teachers interacting with parents at IAA/SA versus Ira Allen (who are bused). Liz believes there are "wrap around" programs to engage parents of kids at Ira Allen.

Martine - wants more information on consolidated Early Ed programs in two buildings. She is more familiar with small / local programs.

Tracey likes the idea of a BHS ReEnvisioning committee for Preschool.

Keith - there is difference between localized preschools and IRA - more equipment at IRA for specific needs - we need to be better about sharing what we are already doing.

Kate - her son leveraged Essential Early Education services a number of years ago. She likes the idea of consolidated centers because it allows for integration with general Early Education students.

Liz - a lot of Early Education discussion is about class privilege. There are 6 trauma-informed preschools that the Howard Center works with. When they can't be placed, because we can't meet needs - we don't have an equitable situation. There are a lot of complex dynamics around preschool - it would be great to set up a ReEnvision committee for pre-K. Liz gives history - cost benefit analysis.

Mike - what was the working group that came up with that strategy?

Liz - this was through the capital planning process.

Martine - we are here because the onus is on the board & BSD to engage with the community with these issues

Tyler - Liz: why did you preface your statement with talking about privilege?

Liz: it's awareness raising

Tyler: Why did you start your great information by starting with saying that people are classist?

Liz: it's my responsibility to raise that awareness, that is who I am

Tracey: I am here because I'm advocating on behalf of IAA/SA families. There was a lack of engagement.

Liz - not making a judgement on their effort. But it is a complex issue.

Diane - the community needs to be involved from the beginning. We can't have committees working on things and not involve the public. If you don't get involvement you won't get support.

Mark B. - broaden what Liz is saying - people come to us with different interests and we have to work within a system with limited means.

Martine: there is hubris when a body says "we don't need your input, we the are experts"

Mike - we can't just react to public comment - who are we not hearing from?

Joanna - don't want to rehash this past spring. She does a lot of IT and tech work. In software development they use the Agile framework which involves collecting use cases - everything a user might want to do with a piece of software. Gather use cases from the community. In software - you have to prioritize. Visit each preschool, meet with parents and teachers. Also great to talk to kindergarten teachers, and people who aren't in the system (who don't send their kids to BSD Early Ed). Ratio wasn't talked about - ratio with pre-k. Teacher to student ratio is crucial.

Tyler - enjoys talking to Liz. Community engagement - thinks it is a great idea. Has had a lot of great conversations with people. Have more conversations with more people.

Diane - what are the next steps?

Mike: Martine and I will work to figure out the next steps.

Liz - Early Ed ReEnvisioning committee is a priority

9. Adjournment

Co-chair Fisher adjourned at 7:55pm

Respectfully submitted,

Commissioner Mike Fisher