



Upcoming Meeting Dates

BOE Ad Hoc Communications Committee Final Draft Presentation of Goals – June 2013



***MEETING  
DATES***

UPCOMING MEETING DATES

- |         |   |
|---------|---|
| June 11 | 7:30 PM – Board of Education<br>Regular Meeting<br>501 Kings Highway East<br>2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor Board Conference Room                                |
| June 13 | 9:00 AM – Board of Education Meeting<br>Goals Advisory Committee Meeting<br>725 Old Post Road<br>Sullivan Independence Hall<br>Basement Conference Room |
| June 17 | 4:15 PM – Policy Committee Meeting<br>501 Kings Highway East<br>Superintendent’s Conference Room  |
| June 25 | 7:30 PM – Board of Education<br>Regular Meeting<br>501 Kings Highway East<br>2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor Board Conference Room                                |

**BoE AdHoc Communications Committee**  
**Final Draft Presentation of Goals and Suggestions for Full Board Feedback**

**June 2013**

**Committee Members: Jessica Gerber, Philip Dwyer and Perry Liu**

The Communications Subcommittee was formed as a result of the BoE's vote on shared Board goals for 2013. As voted on unanimously by the Board at its October 2012 meeting, it was decided that the Board would:

“Establish an ad hoc committee to develop a communications plan (social media, blog, news media, surveys, focus groups, community conversations, etc.), to be reported to the full Board at the first Board Meeting in June. The goal of such plan will be to enhance communications with parents, staff, community leaders, and the general public, engage in a two-way dialogue, and build support for district goals.”

Jessica Gerber, Phil Dwyer and Perry Liu agreed to work together as the committee and began meeting on a monthly basis starting in November.

At the committee's first meeting on November 20, 2012 they voted on a chair (Mrs. Gerber), and came up with a list of ideas/goals for the committee to work on (see attachment A), with the expectation that they would run them by the Board for a sense of their approval, with the ultimate goal to make a full report on the committee's accomplishments/findings at the first BoE meeting in June (Tuesday, June 11).

At subsequent meetings, the committee set up a schedule for members to attend PTA meetings at all elementary, middle and high schools, to share the committee's (and the board's) goals, and to get feedback from PTA members, and over the next few months these visits took place. Through ongoing PTA feedback, the committee had discussions regarding public comment at meetings, BoE meeting minutes, ways to improve the BoE website, and other ways to facilitate improved and more open communication between the Board and the general public. In addition to the PTA visits, the committee members met with Nancy Byrne, the head of IT, to discuss ways to improve the information provided on the BoE website, and also had Dr. Title join us to provide guidance as to how we can differentiate between BoE, Dr. Title's office and the FPS. After running some ideas past the full Board, the committee did make a few changes and additions to the website - providing links to FairTV, and making it easier for the public to locate meeting agendas and minutes. Additionally, based on feedback from our PTA visits, we added a "Voting Summary" to the beginning of our meeting minutes - this provides a quick snapshot of our meeting for those who don't want to read the full minutes. We also researched other districts to look for ideas.

The committee then came up with a final list of recommendations for the full Board to discuss and possibly take action on (**see attachment B**).

In all, the committee met seven times - November 20, December 18, January 15, February 2, April 9, May 7 and June 4, and in addition to those meetings, all three members attended PTA meetings at all of the elementary, middle and high schools in town, as well as SEPTA and PTAC. We also reported to the full Board with updates on February 26 and May 21 before bringing our full set of recommendations in on June 11.

Our by-laws state that when an advisory committee issues its final report it is deemed dissolved, so we thought it might make sense to have one more committee meeting, in order to revise the goals, based on June 11th's full Board discussion. Hence, these should be viewed as our draft final recommendations with action by the Board to adopt the final report at its second regular meeting in June.

November 2012 Initial List (created by committee members) of Possible Ideas for the Communications Committee to pursue (Attachment A)

- 1) Add more information to the Board of Ed front page on the website - FAQs, info about how meetings are run, when they take place, etc - add to website and also make up hard copies to distribute to PTAs, town bodies, Town Hall, library, Parks & rec Center, etc.
- 2) *On "Meetings" line on website, add "Minutes/Agendas", so that the public knows this is where they can find them. Also provide link to FairTV.*
- 3) *Provide link form Town website "Elected Officials" page to list of BoE members/contact info.*
- 4) Have calendar on front page of BoE website with all BoE and BoE-related meetings.
- 5) *Do outreach to PTA Council, SEPTA and PTAs, as well as non-school based groups (other governing bodies, neighborhood associations, etc), to find out what types of communication improvements they would like to se from the BoE. Have different BoE members attend PTA meetings to get feedback. Possible survey?*
- 6) Facebook page?
- 7) Board newsletter - fact based or more opinion pieces. Online and hard copies.
- 8) *Work on clarifying/delineating roles and titles - difference between BoE and school district/admin.*
- 9) Expand info on Board members on the school website
- 10) Community engagement - do we want to reach out/encourage more input opportunities from community?
- 11) Any additional ideas, thoughts, suggestions from Board members would be helpful in moving forward.

## **Communications List for Board Input (Attachment B)**

- 1) Keep in contact with the PTAs – should have a Board member attend two PTA meetings (not at a school where their children attend) each school year. Perhaps one PTA meeting, and one special event, to build better relationships.
- 2) Send three or four memos out to the PTAs and other town bodies regarding BoE meeting topics and a quick recap from the most recent meeting(s). Possible responsibility of secretary? Or could set up rotating schedule for Board officers: the Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary. (see attachment C for an example)
- 3) Town Hall meeting – possibly in October/November? Follow format similar to BoF budget forum with modifications. Should last no more than two hours. Perhaps have sign-up list for speakers. BoE members should each have a chance to speak briefly.
- 4) Facebook page – Too many practical limitations; don't recommend.
- 5) Provide an opportunity at each BoE meeting for recognition of students who achieve state recognition. Since the other town bodies are focusing on athletics we could focus on academic and club accomplishments. Ask BoE members and Central Office Leadership Team to keep an ear out and make suggestions to the Chair.
- 6) Clarify certain organizational terms by adding them to the definitions section of the Board adopted handbook. The purpose is to limit confusion and provide clarity regarding origin of memos and communications.

**BoE** (Board of Education) – This abbreviation and/or phrase will be used whenever communicating about topics that are discussed by the elected Board of Education or its related committees.

**FPS** (Fairfield Public Schools) – This abbreviation and/or phrase will be used whenever communicating about topics that refer to the school district in its entirety.

**COLT** (Central Office Leadership Team) – This abbreviation and/or phrase reflects the Superintendent's senior leadership team and is currently composed of the Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent, Director of Elementary Education, Director of Secondary Education, Director of Special Education and Special Programs, Director of Human Resources, Director of Operations and Director of Finance and Business Services.

**DLT** (District Leadership Team) – This abbreviation and/or phrase reflects an expanded key leadership team and is

currently comprised of the COLT Team plus elementary and middle school principals, high school headmasters and housemasters, middle school assistant principals, curriculum leaders and special education coordinators.

**SDO** (School District Offices) – This is located at 501 Kings Highway, Fairfield, CT and is the location of the Superintendent’s office and the offices of the Central Office Leadership Team, along with support staff who give guidance, direction and support to the Fairfield Public Schools on a day to day basis. It is also the location (generally) for all regular and special meetings of the Board of Education

- 7) Survey – Students and families in Fairfield are being surveyed on a number of items, and this pattern will continue given the School Climate legislation. There has been a suggestion to have the BOE also conduct a survey. There was debate in committee as to whether the focus of the survey should be solely on the effectiveness of BoE communications, or more broadly on the effectiveness of the BoE. The Communications Committee seeks guidance from the full BOE on this idea.
- 8) BoE member bios to post on website (see attachments D and E for examples)
- 9) PR Intern? College student (need to figure out logistics). Can send out info to local press and also send out noteworthy press articles to other town bodies. Or could/should this be a BoE responsibility?
- 10) The committee recommends that at the Fall discussion of bylaws there is clarification of procedures for public suggestions and complaints and also the placement of agenda items (see BoE handbook page 7, and page 13, VII A).
- 11) Public comment. One option would be to allow for general comment at the start of each meeting. Set time limits. Signup sheet to allow for a maximum number of speakers (10, 20, 25?). Public comment would/could still take place before each vote – however, if you’ve spoken to that topic during General Comment you then cannot speak to the same topic before the vote.

## **Quarterly Memo – Example (Attachment C)**

The first three months of 2013 were incredibly busy for the Fairfield BoE. There were two regular meetings in January as well as two budget review meetings, and while there was only one regular meeting in February and one in March, there were additional town meetings involving school issues that many Board members attended.

### **January 2013**

The first meeting of the year on January 15 covered a variety of topics. Food service consultant John Turenne made a presentation to the Board with his ideas regarding ways to improve and encourage healthy eating trends for all FPS students. Dr. Title presented his 2013-2014 budget to the Board and gave a brief rundown, with the understanding that the next two meetings would be taken up with extensive Board discussion and Q&As. There was an update of the secondary math curriculum, which had been the focus of extensive discussion at the December 2012 meeting. Doreen Munsell gave the quarterly budget update. There was a discussion of and vote on suggested bylaw changes – one regarding creating a BoE liaison to the FEA (teachers' union), and one regarding increasing the amount of time that Board members have to review meeting documents and information from 5 days to 7 days. Both motions failed. There was a first read of a couple of policies regarding student internet use. The Board added one item to the agenda – a vote on the revised OHS Window Project Ed Specs (done so to address the PCB situation), which passed unanimously. Another building project was also discussed – Ed Specs for the upcoming FLHS renovation and expansion project.

The next two Board meetings were for budget review. On Tuesday, January 22, the Board spent close to 2 ½ hours discussing different facets of Dr. Title's recommended budget, and asked many questions of Dr. Title and his staff. On Thursday, January 24, the Board spent another 3+ hours examining the budget. A request was made of Dr. Title to present a list of suggested cuts that could be made to his recommended budget BEFORE it goes to the other Town bodies.

The second Regular meeting of January took place at FWHS, due to the large number of attendees who wanted to hear the discussion on the budget. First there was a motion to postpone the vote on the approval of the FLHS Ed Specs, and this motion passed. Next there was a vote on the Student Internet Policy and a policy on Electronic Monitoring – Personnel, both of which passed. After that, the remainder of the meeting was taken up with the budget. After a number of amendments were made, the budget was approved, with reductions totaling approximately \$345,000 – the most significant adjustment was in regards to the change from the extended day kindergarten program to an all-full day kindergarten program.



## **February 2013**

The BoE met once in February, on the 26<sup>th</sup>. The Board received a presentation from CES (Cooperative Educational Services) regarding the new state-mandated Teacher and Administrator Evaluation Plan/Requirements, which will have long-reaching implications for Fairfield. Next up was a review of the Capital Projects Waterfall. The only voting item was an approval of the FLHS renovation and expansion ed specs, which passed, with one amendment made to remove the renovation of the student bathrooms.

## **March 2013**

The BoE met only once in March, on the 12<sup>th</sup>. The main agenda item was a presentation of the proposed PK-2 Math Curriculum, which was given to the Board by Director of Elementary Education Anna Cutaia Leonard and Elementary Math Curriculum leader Walter Wakeman as well as numerous elementary teachers throughout the district. The Board also had a first reading of a new policy regarding administration of medication in school. The only action taken, other than approving the minutes from the February meeting, was to approve a member of the FairTV Advisory Council.

Other subcommittee meetings that took place during this period of time were for the Policy Subcommittee (January 7, 15 and March 4) the BoE Goals review Advisory Committee (February 7, March 14) and the Communications Subcommittee (January 15, February 21).

### **Town meetings which involved BoE issues**

Board of Selectman: January 2 (OHS PCBs and Riverfield Building Committee), January 23 (Riverfield Building Committee), March 6 (OHS Building Committee appointments); and March 20 (Riverfield Building Committee).

Board of Finance: January 8 (OHS PCBs), January 30 (BoE 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter financial report); February 7 (Capital Planning Workshop); March 23 (public budget forum); and March 28 (final budget deliberations).

Joint BoS/BoF Budget meeting: March 5

RTM: January 28 (OHS PCBs); March 18 (OHS Building Committee appointments)

To read the full meeting minutes for BoE meetings go to:

[http://fairfieldschools.org/board\\_of\\_education\\_meetings.htm](http://fairfieldschools.org/board_of_education_meetings.htm)

For Town meeting minutes go to:

<http://cal.fairfieldct.org/content/79/default.aspx>

To watch BoE and other town bodies' meetings go to:

<http://fairtv.pegcentral.com/index.php>

**Jessica Gerber, 2011-2015 (D)**

Attended public school in Suffern, NY. Graduated from Wesleyan University with a BA in English in 1990.

Worked in NYC in the book publishing industry as a publicist from 1990-1995 and 1996-1998

Lived overseas in Hong Kong, London and Taipei.

PTA Board member at Osborn Hill School, 2007-2011

BoE Secretary 2011-present

BoE Liaison to Parks & Rec Commission, FLHS Windows and Expansion Project and SEPTA

Chair of Ad hoc Communications Committee

**Jessica Gerber (D)** has been a member of the Fairfield BoE since November 2011. In addition to being Board Secretary and Chair of the Ad-hoc Communications Committee, she is also the BoE Liaison to the Parks & Rec Commission, the FLHS Windows and Expansion Project and SEPTA.

Prior to joining the Board Jessica was the Osborn Hill PTA BoE representative for five years, served as a liaison to the SPSBC and was a parent rep on the BoE's Facilities subcommittee's ad-hoc redistricting committee.

A 17-year resident of Fairfield, Jessica lives with her husband Bill and their two children - John (OHS, RLMS, FLHS) and Gillian (OHS, soon to be FWMS). Prior to moving to Fairfield, Jessica, who grew up in Suffern NY, and graduated in 1990 from Wesleyan University (BA English); lived in NYC, where she worked in the book publishing industry as a publicist. She also has lived overseas, in Hong Kong, London, and Taipei.

**Philip Dwyer, 2011-2015 (D)**

Hometown: Marblehead, MA

Education: BA – Springfield College; MA – Lehigh University

Family: Spouse – Deborah; Sons – Scott, graduated from FPS in 1997; Mark, graduated from FPS in 1999

Community Activities: Fairfield Youth Soccer, First Church Congregational, Fairfield Foundation for Education; Trustee, Springfield College

Prior Elective Office: Member, Northampton County Council, 1981-84; Rye Board of Education, 1988-92

BOE Offices: Vice Chair, 2011-12; Chair, 2012-present

Current BOE Committee memberships: Ad Hoc Communications Advisory Committee, Liaison to Board of Finance, Ad Hoc Mission and Goals Advisory Committee

**Philip Dwyer – 2011-2015 (D)**

Mr. Dwyer was elected to the Board of education in 2011. He currently serves as Chair of the Board and is a member of the Ad Hoc Communications Committee, Mission and Goals Review Committee, Liaison to the Board of Finance. Mr. Dwyer graduated from Marblehead, MA High School and received a BA from Springfield College and an MA from Lehigh University. He is married to Deborah Dwyer and his two sons, Scott and Mark, graduated from Fairfield Public Schools. He is the retired President/CEO of the central Connecticut Coast YMCA, having previously served the YMCA in New York City, Bethlehem, PA and West Hartford, CT. He has been involved in Fairfield Youth Soccer and served as Founding Director and Treasurer of the Fairfield Foundation for Education and is a past Trustee of Springfield College. Mr. Dwyer held prior elective office as a member of Northampton County Council, PA and the Rye, NY Board of Education. He enjoys golf and traveling, having visited 48 states in the USA and almost 20 different countries. (172 words)