

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education Policy Committee met in Special Session on Wednesday, April 5, 2023 at 4:00 PM in the library at Coginchaug Regional High School.

Committee members present: Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy (by phone), Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore and Mr. Roraback

Committee members absent: None

Board members present: Ms. Betty (by phone) and Mrs. Petrella

Administration present: Dr. Schuch, Superintendent of Schools

Mr. Moore called the meeting to order at 4:00 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Public Comment

None.

Approval of Agenda

Mr. Mennone made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Dahlheimer, to approve the agenda, as presented.

In favor of approving the agenda, as presented: Mrs. Dahlheimer, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore and Mr. Roraback. Motion passed.

Approval of Minutes - March 15, 2023

Mrs. Dahlheimer made a motion, seconded by Mr. Mennone, to approve the minutes of March 15, 2023 as presented.

In favor of approving the minutes of March 15, 2023, as presented: Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore and Mr. Roraback. Motion passed.

Discussion and possible action regarding policy for community event flyers

Mr. Moore reviewed that they had discussed several options, including removing flyers altogether from Facebook or website pages and limiting it to district/school functions only. The issue with that would be groups holding events where the money comes back to the district, i.e. POPs and Benchwarmers.

Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that the best thing to do would be to stick to in-school events because the individual groups all have specific social media pages and followings as well as the fact that the district doesn't have control over all of their fund-raisers. Mr. Mennone agreed that it would be best to avoid any turmoil. Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that the towns should exercise due diligence to get community flyers out and it isn't necessarily a district responsibility. She has looked at surrounding districts' sites and sees only school activities.

Dr. Darcy felt that if the intent is that the events are school-sponsored, they have to be very clear with the language because “school-related” is not really definitive. Mr. Mennone hoped that Shipman would help make that language appropriate. Mrs. Petrella agreed that whatever is decided, it needs to be very clearly defined.

Dr. Schuch felt that the terms that were of concern were “community flyers” and, by definition, those do not include school-sponsored events. He understood that it is a service that the district has historically provided for the community and one way to go about this is to say that that service will be discontinued. He felt that as long as the district continues to do it, people will want to take advantage of it.

Mrs. Dahlheimer added that posts usually get more traction when they are placed somewhere else and Mr. Roraback summarized that it’s not really of huge value to the community. Mrs. Dahlheimer would like the site to promote and showcase the successes of the district.

Ms. Betty felt that the Facebook page should be used to showcase what the district is doing, student athletes and clubs. Mr. Roraback added that he would want to be sure all students sign release forms which he presumes is done. Mr. Mennone has heard parents comment that there isn’t a lot of showcasing of sports events.

Dr. Darcy asked if each school has a Facebook page and Mrs. Dahlheimer explained that Coginchaug is the only school that does. Dr. Darcy felt that using it for showcasing students will come with a price tag of hours for someone. Mrs. Dahlheimer stated that there are districts where the Board of Education does the monitoring and posting. Mr. Mennone asked who posts on the Instagram page and Mrs. Dahlheimer believed it cross-posts from Facebook. Dr. Schuch noted that his prior districts have had communications people who ran social media and there were individuals designated at the school level. He felt that they could do any and all of that here in the district.

Mr. Moore suggested it be an activity for the Devil’s Advocate writers. Dr. Schuch explained that the only way to create a real following on social media is to continuously post. Mr. Mennone added that a lot of the information that everyone gets through Parent Square is not on social media. He felt that they need to do better with social media, but it should just be district items.

Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that they needed to get specific language from Shipman. She added that she would like the Policy committee to recommend to the board tonight to discontinue community flyers. Mr. Roraback thought that they were going to let it continue through the end of the school year with a disclaimer, but Mr. Moore felt that that was why they were having this meeting tonight and their recommendation will go through the process with the full board. Mrs. Dahlheimer wondered if they had grounds to stop the community flyers and Dr. Schuch cautioned that they should be careful about discussing anything that was discussed in executive session.

Mr. Moore mentioned that another policy was adapted for advertising and contains a whole series of conditions. He wondered if that was broad enough to regulate what goes on social media as the intent was for advertising. Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that advertising and promoting are one in the same and she believes that policy would cover it.

Mr. Moore also believes there should be a policy to remove posts after a certain amount of time. Dr. Schuch stated that that is already being done periodically. Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that that would not make

sense to do if it were only district events that are posted. Mr. Roraback also felt that students could monitor the site as part of their community service hours.

Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that posting of progress or success for seniors, like Eagle Scout projects, should be allowed. Dr. Darcy cautioned that that would mean they need to post any student achievement. Mrs. Petrella also noted they had an issue with posting live pictures. In general, it was agreed that they have to be careful with what is posted. Mr. Mennone and Dr. Schuch both felt that would be covered by the releases that are signed, but they need to be mindful of parents' wishes. Mrs. Dahlheimer also felt that the waiver needs to be fully explained to parents and asked if parents have to fill that out every year. Mrs. Keane confirmed that it is reviewed and has to be filled out every year.

Mrs. Petrella noted that there is a link on the district's website for community flyers and on Parent Square and asked if that would stay. Dr. Schuch's recommendation would be to discontinue community flyers across all media. Mr. Moore summarized that they will recommend to the full board to eliminate/discontinue any access for community flyers and establish the use of Facebook for notification of district activities only. Mrs. Petrella felt that they need to define what they mean by district activities and include that in the policy. Dr. Schuch will have Shipman check on that, but felt that it wasn't necessarily policy but more practice.

Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that it would be detrimental to leave community flyers online between now and June and her recommendation would be that they be taken down. Mr. Mennone wondered if they can legally do that and Dr. Schuch felt that it wasn't something they should discuss in this setting. He added that he felt the volume has significantly reduced since putting up the disclaimer.

Public Comment

None.

Adjournment

Mr. Mennone made a motion, seconded by Mr. Roraback, to adjourn the meeting.

In favor of adjourning the meeting: Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore and Mr. Roraback. Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:32 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

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Alwaz First