

MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC/COMMUNITY RELATIONS COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Region 14 Public/Community Relations Committee was held on Tuesday, January 20, 2015 in the conference room at Bethlehem Elementary School, 92 East Street, Bethlehem, CT.

The following members were present: Committee Chair Carol Ann Brown, committee member Maryanne Van Aken, also, Superintendent Anna Cutaia-Leonard; Board members Mike Devine and Charles Cosgriff; PTO leaders Eileen Budrewicz, Kristine Cuccia and Roberta Zulpa; Director of Instruction Sue Domanico; community member Patti Knowlton; and clerk Deb Carlton.

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 pm and concluded at 7:25 pm

The committee and guests came together for a round table discussion of ways to better communicate with the schools and the community. Ms. Brown commented that PTO involvement seems to wane and strengthen over the years and questioned the PTO presidents about how they encourage membership and participation.

Ms. Cuccia explained that basically all parent volunteer at BES are offered a place on the board, and she then listed off events her group puts on over the course of the school year. Asked what she believes the role of the PTO is at BES, Ms. Cuccia responded that she seeks to bring fun into the schools, and added she finds it difficult to get parents involved.

Ms. Budrewicz said the MES PTO does similar activities to those at BES, and agreed that it is frustrating and challenging for those parents who have stepped up to try to get new people to get active. Her group gives constant reminders for participation and finds that few parents are willing or able to be involved. She senses apathy in the community but doesn't know what to attribute it to.

Ms. Zulpa agreed about community apathy, and cited lack of volunteers for the 8th grade dance.

Ms. Budrewicz added that the PTOs are at the mercy of Region 14 personnel to send out information for them. She cited issues with the website, in general, as contributing to difficulty in getting information out.

Dr. Cutaia-Leonard asked how parents sign up to receive notifications, and was told it is part of the initial paperwork at the beginning of the year. Very few sign up for the service, and so are not notified by email. The PTO would like to reach a larger audience, electronically, adding most parents are on social media so facebook pages have been the more successful way to reach them.

Discussion followed regarding NEAT TV and it was concluded that parents and community members are not looking for information there. It is meant as a showcase for students learning how to produce video and not meant to be professionally produced or perfect.

Ms. Budrewicz felt all Region 14 information should be linked to the district website; all information should be able to be easily found there. As for communicating to parents, it was felt that everyone reads and responds to texts.

Asked what parents are dissatisfied with, what they are apathetic about, the PTO presidents agreed the same people are tired of doing the same things over and over.

Periodic mailings were also discussed as a way to communicate what is happening in the district.

Respectfully Submitted,

Carol Ann Brown

Carol Ann Brown, Chair
Public/Community Relations Committee