

BCCE Listening Sessions
1/29/20 & 2/25/20
Room 170/172

Draft Classification into Board, District, Community Wide Opportunities
pp. 1-6 followed by Draft Notes pp. 7-14

Board Community Engagement Opportunities:

Committees / Focus Groups:

- **Diane Greenwald:** Outreach, including active and direct reach out to people, are essential to the District's work. Board members need to hear voices and gather values from the breadth of the community. Commended open forum but asked how do you reach other populations?
- **Sarah Bell:** Advisory Councils that draw on community knowledge are another way to draw people in
- **Rachana Singh:** Parent surveys - gather input and ideas, building by building

Expanded Reach of Board:

- **Leah Dembitzer (LWVS Statement):** Encourage Board to be proactive and wide-reaching in soliciting input and feedback; to engage in dialogue with community members and groups to better and more fully understand constituent views and broader community priorities. Some ways to achieve this would be Board coffees, focus groups and formal invitations to specific neighborhoods for Board meetings. The League recommends that the Board:
 - Engage early interest in District issues;
 - actively seek input from residents to identify the range of community sentiment;
 - engage in clear and timely communication methods;
 - create spaces for dialogue.
- **Diane Greenwald:** (1) Host Board meetings at elementary schools; (2) Actively organize Board members to be in and attend spaces / events where people are gathered so Board members are available and present; (3) Embed community dialogue into every issue - student performance, teacher retention, Strategic Plan, budget, etc; (4) Consider road shows and/or focus groups for certain important topics.
- **Laura Liu:**
 - Simplification of language for foreign language speakers has helped parents tune in.

- Mandarin speaking community started a channel on Mandarin social media. It has received good responses, and more parents are tuned into operations in the District and Village. People are willing to help - bridge building and outreach.
- Started multicultural parent support group for parents who typically shy away from parent groups
- Large multicultural population - need to reach out and target that community

Scarsdale Public Library Relationship with Board (Beth Bermel):

- Suggested creating a Board liaison position for the Library and expressed that Library and School Boards need to work together.
- Library provides untold support to students; it is an extension of the schools
- Need to figure out on a high level how BOE and Library interact

Contacting the Board (Venu Angara): A generic inbox can feel like a black hole; whoever is controlling the inbox needs to provide a 24 hour response rate; also noted he doesn't receive responses from generic email addresses - he resorts to emailing directly to a contact person. Receiving responses will help remove view that it is a bunch of insiders on Board and Village Board

Aligning Issues with Values of the District (Diane Greenwald): Balancing issues such as safety and security with our values of community is important; we need to connect to the ecosystem of our community - non sibi, Circle of Friends. How do we ensure we enhance the community aspect when making changes to areas that might impact it such as safety changes.

Crafting BOE Messages (Jenn Zola via email):

- there did seem to be a bit of a gap between the need for "more outreach and info" and the feeling of "too much info sent out." Some of it may be simply a matter of better organized content delivery, but much of it I think comes down to relevance, meaning if the information is relevant to people, they will find it.
- finding a way to make the information that the BOE deems relevant to the general public more appealing to the public to receive.

Public Comment Responses (Deb Morel): Answers/responses to public comments and emailed questions aren't communicated publicly; if answers/responses are useful to the community, and not individual, can the responses be posted?

PROPOSAL RECEIVED 10/5/2020 from Scarsdale Forum / Education Committee:

[Report of the Education Committee On A Proposal for the Formation of a School Community Communications Committee](#)

Received via email 11/17/2020 from the LWVS - [2020 League Board Comment on Board of Education Community Engagement](#).

Received via email 11/22/2020 from the SF - Education Committee Proposal: [Short Term opportunities](#) would be:

- Hold a multi-stakeholder meeting facilitated by a neutral party which would propose action plans,
- Review and adjust restart/current communications plan,
- Use the design thinking method again, with the help of a skilled facilitator, to update components of our District's Restart Plan going forward, and
- Consider adopting the two remaining principles of the research's "Seven Principles for Schooling in a Time of COVID-19": (1) "Liberatory Approaches to Equity" and (2) "Building Time Will Be Gold."

District Community Engagement Opportunities:

Finding Information / District Website:

- **Joey Silberfein:** Where can Board related information be found on the website? Include link to watch Board meetings in Board Meeting Highlights.
- **Jenny Simon Tabek:** Suggested adding interesting facts to the Board highlights, ie. "Did you know you can find?"
- **Jill Serling:** Asked how to retain people whose kids are no longer in the District in terms of receiving communications and volunteering? She noted that she just receives the District's newsletter Insight, and she suggested a campaign via SNAP.
- **Valerie Abrahams:** Suggested improving the search bar for the District website for easy access to information.
- **Deb Morel:** There needs to be more links - redundancy of links - between the District, Village, and County for information so there are different options for obtaining information.
- **Diane Greenwald:** There is so much information on the website that no one knows about; could there be a "did you know" in the newsletter that highlights information?
- **PSA / Civics 101 about School / Village Responsibilities (Lena Crandall):** There is a need to explain the roles of each entity to help alleviate confusion; what does the school do? What does the Village do? What does the County do? (District?)

Student Involvement (Lena Crandall): Inform social studies teachers that students are welcome to comment and share input; should be part of civics curriculum

Parking for Meetings at SHS:

- **Joey Silberfein:** Pointed out the parking issue at the District, for morning meetings especially, and suggested bussing people from another location for large meetings held during the school day.
- **Marian Green:** Parking for events is difficult; save spots
- **NOTE:** *District has already updated the meeting room reservation form to include requests for parking spaces.*

Emergency Communications Review (Lena Crandall): Provided the example of emergency situations, such as Hurricane Sandy, when the Village had to use the District phone messaging system; suggested a high-level review of how to communicate safety information.

Social Media (Kelly Halyard, Fox Meadow PT President): Suggested using social media to reach people instead of emails; people feel bombarded with emails.

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Community-wide Community Engagement Opportunities:

- **Joey Silberfein:** Suggested a gathering of leadership - SNAP, Library ,etc - to come together and work together. Outreach to community leadership (including library gathering to discuss ways to work together. Collaboration is broader than the Board. Library is point of intersection to help bridge and also a safe, neutral space.

Wisdom Counsel

- **Diane Greenwald:** Committee consisting of former BoE members and other representatives with significant experience from the Forum, LWVS, and other organizations. Volunteers would stay engaged and share their institutional knowledge. New people would gain knowledge and resources from them. Non-sibi and Circle of Friends ecosystem notion is important. New protocols have affected the community. BoE and District need to maintain the “Circle of Friends”.
- **Jill Serling:** A Wisdom Council would allow for the capturing of collective knowledge of former volunteers; retain institutional knowledge; honor wisdom

Community Outreach Groups

- **Wendy Gendel:** Phone calls is one of the best ways to do community outreach. Can expand our reach if we have other people to reach out to their networks/individual groups to convey messages. Need help of community to get outreach; shouldn't just be on the Board
- **Joey Silberfein:** There's been a shift with communications with PTC and Board. PTA still communicates District events. Board should use tools such as the PTAs to reach the most people. Use more people to convey to their constituents because it is important to reach everyone. If we only have certain people/groups does the outreach, may not reach the broader community.
- **Sarah Bell:** The mission of SNAP and the neighborhood associations is to facilitate communication (Village, residents, Board); the resource is there - need to figure out how to better use it.
- **Marian Green:** Suggested drawing people in by asking people to bring someone new - a new person (friend) to meetings to engage and expand attendance
- **Jay Genova:** Noted that even though there may be a resource page available on the website, how do you know what to look for? He suggested changing or duplicating the organizational/topics list and adding topic based headings to the resource page to help direct users.
- **Rachana Singh:** New parent to Scarsdale and is curious about parent involvement, how best to reach parents; find and access parent surveys to assess the special education population, curriculum, I.D.A., etc.
- **Deb Morel:** There needs to be more links - redundancy of links - between the District, Village, and County for information so there are different options for obtaining information.

Building Community (Lena Crandall):

- The more we build community, the safer we are; isolated individuals will act out; send message that all are invited to be part of the community
- How can we use what we have more efficiently and effectively so communication is sustainable? (District, school, community members).
- Highlight the organizations page from the back of the Community Calendar; Community Calendar helpful for Circle of Friends and building a sense of community.

Meeting Space / Sharing Resources:

- **Felicia Block, Administrative Chair for SBNC):** Suggested sharing resources, especially in terms of space for meetings. Overwhelmed by the outreach by different organizations. How can we better share space? How can we find places where people can gather and support our schools and Village?

- **Sarah Bell:** Presented potential solutions to some of the issues raised. Every household is connected to a neighborhood association; every neighborhood association has a Board and a designated space for their meetings. The venue varies by the association but every association has space for meetings and these spaces could be used by community groups (e.g. SBNC)

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Other Topics - Not Related to Community Engagement:

Wellness:

- **Jenny Simon Tabek:** Homework - Expressed concern about the homework demands on children and their being overloaded after school. There needs to be a District discussion on rigor/extra curriculars/wellness.
- **Laura Liu:** As part of Students wellness and curriculum, needs to be students centered perspective on formulation of identity, especially as a 1st generation American

Safety & Security (Sarah Bell): Suggested utilizing community members who have knowledge for safety and security matters to advise the District on safety issues and possibly form an advisory committee

Community Organization Overview:

- **Marian Green:** Need a primer about community organizations, something especially for new residents. Address the line of demarcation between the District and Village.
- **Venu Angara:** There are a lot of organizations out there and where to go with an issue is confusing

Bullying Procedures / Protocols (Venu Angara): He inquired about bullying procedures (cyber, physical) and the protocol in place in the District.

Budget (Leah Dembitzer - LWV): In terms of the annual Budget process, the League recommends that the Board:

- provide the community sufficient information and time necessary to view any Administration or Board member Budget recommendation within the larger context of District educational goals, a master facilities' plan, and through the lens of Scarsdale's role as an educational leader.

- The League believes that in order to understand what is at stake for our children and our community in the budget process and to make informed choices, voters need transparency on all value considerations including the needs that are not being addressed in any given proposed budget, in order to better understand the wider breadth of future District needs and plans.

Advocacy (Leah Demtizer - LWV): The League recommends that the Administration and Board reinstate a Legislative Advisory Committee comprised of broad community representation, in order to:

- monitor relevant legislative issues;
- increase the number of community members educated on current issues;
- expand the community's engagement;
- And to raise an awareness of the often-complicated legislative issues that may impact the district.

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- Hold a multi-stakeholder meeting facilitated by a neutral party which would propose action plans,
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- Consider adopting the two remaining principles of the research's "Seven Principles for Schooling in a Time of COVID-19": (1) "Liberatory Approaches to Equity" and (2) "Building Time Will Be Gold."

DRAFT NOTES of both Listening Sessions: Original Format

Joey Silberfein:

- Include link to watch Board meetings in Board Meeting Highlights
- Where can things be found on the website?

Deb Morel

- Answers/responses to public comments and emailed questions aren't communicated publicly; if answers/responses are useful, and not individual, then make available

Lena Crandall

- Inform social studies teachers that students are welcome to comment and share input; should be part of civics curriculum

Leah Dembitzer

- LWVS statement: ([statement](#))

Diane Greenwald

- Commended open forum but asked how do you reach other populations?
- Focus groups and outreach/personal asking are essential to the District's work. Board members need to hear voices and gather values from the breadth of the community. There is need for active outreach, to hear from the "unusual voices."
- Recommends: 1. Have Board meetings at elem schools; 2 put Board members in spaces where people are gathered; Board members need to be available and present 3. Embed community dialogue into every issue - student performance, teacher retention, Strategic Plan, budget.
- Suggests creating a "Wisdom Counsel" consisting of former BoE members, representatives from the Forum, LWVS, etc. Volunteers would stay engaged and share their institutional knowledge. New people would gain knowledge and resources from them.
- Non-sibi and Circle of Friends ecosystem notion is important. New protocols have affected the community. BoE and District need to maintain the "Circle of Friends."

Wendy Gendel

- Community outreach process - making phone calls is one of the best ways
- Use people to reach out to their networks/individual groups to convey messages
- Need help of community to get outreach; shouldn't just be on the Board

Joey Silberfein

- There's been a shift with communications with PTC and Board. PTA still communicates District events. Board should use tools to reach the most people. Use more people to convey to their constituents because it is important to reach everyone.
- Pointed out the parking issue at the District, for morning meetings especially, and suggested bussing people from another location for large meetings held during the school day.

Lena Crandell

- How can we use what we have more efficiently and effectively so communication is sustainable? (District, school, community members).
- Highlight the organizations page from the back of the Community Calendar; Community Calendar helpful for Circle of Friends and building a sense of community.
- The more we build community, the safer we are; isolated individuals will act out; send message that all are invited to be part of the community
- She provided the example of emergency situations, such as Hurricane Sandy, when the Village had to use the District phone messaging system; suggested a high-level review of how to communicate safety information.
- Civics 101 - there is a need to explain the roles of each entity to help alleviate confusion; what does the school do? What does the Village do? What does the County do?

Kelly Halyard, Fox Meadow PT President

- Suggested using social media to reach people instead of emails; people feel bombarded with emails.

Felicia Block, Administrative Chair for SBNC

- Suggested sharing resources, especially in terms of space for meetings. Overwhelmed by the outreach by different organizations.
- How can we better share space? How can we find places where people can gather and support our schools and Village?

Sarah Bell, President of the SNAP

- Presented potential solutions to some of the issues raised. Every household is connected to a neighborhood association; every neighborhood association has a Board and a designated space for their meetings. The venue varies by the association but every association has space for meetings and these spaces could be used by community groups (e.g. SBNC)
- The mission of SNAP and the neighborhood associations is to facilitate communication (Village, residents, Board); the resource is there - need to figure out how to better use it.

Jenny Simon Tabek

- Expressed concern about the homework demands on children and their being overloaded after school. There needs to be a District discussion on rigor/extra curriculars/wellness.
- Also suggested adding interesting facts to the Board highlights, ie. “Did you know you can find?”

Jill Sterling

- Asked how to retain people whose kids are no longer in the District in terms of receiving communications and volunteering? She noted that she just receives the District’s newsletter Insight, and she suggested a campaign via SNAP.
- A Wisdom Council would allow for the capturing of collective knowledge of former volunteers; retain institutional knowledge; honor wisdom

Sarah Bell

- Suggested utilizing community members who have knowledge for safety and security matters to advise the District on safety issues and possibly form an advisory committee
- Advisory Councils that draw on community knowledge are another way to draw people in

Marion Greene

- Suggested drawing people in by asking people to bring someone new - a new person (friend) to meetings to engage and expand attendance
- Parking for events is difficult; save spots
- Need a primer about community organizations, something especially for new residents

Beth Bermel

- Suggested creating a Board liaison position for the Library and expressed that Library and School Boards need to work together.
- Library provides untold support to students; it is an extension of the schools
- Need to figure out on a high level how BOE and Library interact

Venu Angara

- There are a lot of organizations out there and where to go with an issue is confusing
- A generic inbox can feel like a black hole; whoever is controlling the inbox needs to provide a 24 hour response rate; also noted he doesn’t receive responses from generic email addresses - he resorts to emailing directly to a contact person.

- Receiving responses will help remove view that it is a bunch of insiders on Board and Village Board
- He inquired about bullying procedures (cyber, physical) and the protocol in place in the District.

Valerie Abrahams

- Suggested improving the search bar for the District website for easy access to information.

Deb Morel

- There needs to be more links - redundancy of links - between the District, Village, and County for information so there are different options for obtaining information.

Diane Greenwald

- Balancing safety and security with our values of community is important; we need to connect to the ecosystem of our community - non sibi, Circle of Friends
- We have a security shaken culture so need to create communities to reconnect us all
- Board and District need to help build up those connections as a community
- There is so much information on the website that no one knows about; could there be a “did you know” in the newsletter that highlights information?

Laura Liu

- Simplification of language for foreign language speakers has helped parents tune in.
- Mandarin speaking community started a channel on Mandarin social media. It has received good responses, and more parents are tuned into operations in the District and Village. People are willing to help - bridge building and outreach.
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organizational/topics list and adding topic based headings to the resource page to help direct users.

Joey Silberfein

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- Collaboration is broader than the Board
- Library is point of intersection to help bridge and also a safe, neutral space

Marion

- Address the line of demarcation between the District and Village.

Rashna

- New parent to Scarsdale and is curious about parent involvement, how best to reach parents; find and access parent surveys to assess the special education population, curriculum, I.D.A., etc.
- Parent surveys - gather input and ideas, building by building

Jenn Zola via email

- there did seem to be a bit of a gap between the need for "more outreach and info" and the feeling of "too much info sent out." Some of it may be simply a matter of better organized content delivery, but much of it I think comes down to relevance, meaning if the information is relevant to people, they will find it.
- finding a way to make the information that the BOE deems relevant to the general public more appealing to the public to receive.

Pam closed the meeting at 10:00am noting the great ideas, conversation, and thoughts for consideration shared in the meeting. The questions/concerns will be added to the BCCE working document eventually, after the second session and Committee discussion. Ron reminded attendees where they can access the BCCE draft documents and asked them to provide feedback.

Listening Session, Tuesday, February 25, 2020

Pam convened the listening session at 7:33 and reminded community members that the session is taped and may be viewed and she introduced the BCCE. Ron shared the definition of community engagement and the guiding principles of the Committee and reviewed the existing documents available.

Mr. Harrison requested that the ideas that came out of the January meeting be shared. Pam reviewed the list.

1. James Coleman (troop 4 Boy Scouts) - Inquired about the simplification of languages
2. Bob Harrison - expressed concerns that tonight's meeting was held at the same time as the Village meeting. Requested interchange/dialogue on issues that are raised during BoE meeting public comment. The name, email and issues raised during public comment/emails be recorded and public (flow of information, concerns, issues). Spoke about the tax increase.
3. Claudine Gecel - people need to be aware of what other residents' interests are and what community members are thinking - openness is good and needs to be strengthened.
4. BK Mungia - make follow up more readily available. Organizations are affected by schools/District (Board/District willingness to hear from organizations). Issue with an elementary school's response to sharing information being active on the property. How community groups use the BoE/District channels to communicate information.
5. Donna Marie Caro (Scarsdale Girl Scouts) - connection with schools (troop meetings held there) but concerned that although the schools provide a space, the GS get some resistance from the schools - not sending flyers, etc.. Looking for ways to engage the community to benefit the Girl Scouts, flyers/PTA/distribution channels.
6. Dan Colb - (Scarsdale Little League) - Recruiting process - still miss kids because they aren't aware (overseas or young). The rec dept. sends email blasts - requested that communications go out from the District informing community members about the Little League, Girl Scouts, etc. BK - suggested a link on the District website. Provide dates, info (PRC). Use of District/school communication methods by (youth) community organizations/clubs/sports.
7. Laura Thierer - looking for sports information (basketball), hard to find. Access to sports, after school activities, etc. (How do people learn more about community groups?) She shared an example of seniors in her building helping with her son and encouraged the utilization of senior volunteer expertise and involvement in schools. Expressed concerns about bullying and security - how to utilize community resources to address these issues.

8. Getting information out verse policy - suggested that the Village list the activities on their website.
9. Heather Colb - Boy Scouts - Suggested an advisory council, parent surveys, questioned why flyers can't be sent - cived piece to clarify contacts on issues/concerns.
10. Kay Aberman - Scarsdale Seniors - program that would include senior volunteers, this is a resource that isn't being utilized.
11. Addie Shore, Conservation Advisory Counsel - Would like to share efforts on conservation with District and collaborate (electric cars). Meeting with BoE to present ideas. Suggested one-one meetings, presentations, etc. Community members want to know what the District/BoE are doing/efforts/subcommittees regarding conservation/sustainability.
12. Jay Wechsler - QR Neighborhood Assoc./SNAP - Coronavirus email - spoke about QR student/concerns. Seeks guidance from BoE. Security issues - Suggested that the BoE form a Security Advisory Counsel/Committee consisting of security professionals/experts that live in the community.
13. Anthony Zitrin - Suggested using big events like the High School carnival for outreach/communication, and an information booth/flyer distribution at these events.
14. Jingqing Chai - commended the BoE on communication efforts. Asked about the timing of communications on important issues. (for ex. The BoE response to the Freightway Project). Requested as a member of the Chinese Association, to know what the BoE does in terms of education and what they can do to support the schools. Requested that the BoE meet with the group or give a zoom seminar to collaborate ideas/sessions on topics/collaborative opportunities.
15. Darlene Lefrancois Haber (Chair sustainability for the Forum) - Spoke about the money that is available through green new deal (Cuomo), to reduce energy loads. - link to officials to move forward with issues like sustainability. Apply/access money for sustainability specifically. Echo-anxiety issues inflicting the kids and not being addressed in the schools. Encouraged empowerment, engaging, adapting and addressing in the curriculum. Interdisciplinary discussions/work on the topic of wellness and current topics.
16. BK Mungia - outreach - Girl Scout House- open to the District for outreach - would coordinate usage of the house by the Village and District.
17. Christine Ascutlo, (Scarsdale/Edgemont Girl Scouts) expressed concerns with Girl Scouts and encouraged outreach/information at community organization meetings.

Question: Suggestions on how the BoE meetings can be structured differently?

- Commended the BoE for removing the time limit for public comment.
- Noted that the Village Mayor processes the community members that speak at meetings and acknowledges concerns/comments. Urged that the BoE acknowledge community concerns (similar to the Village). Welcoming/receipt of public comments.
- Encouraged BOE President/members and/or Cabinet to briefly respond to public comment in real time (confirm understanding of speaker concerns).
- Requested that the BoE clarify the opportunity to leave BoE meetings early or attend late if necessary and to include this message in the preamble.

Additional input since the 2/25/2020 Listening Session

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