

**FRAMINGHAM SCHOOL COMMITTEE
COMMUNICATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE
WALSH MIDDLE SCHOOL, September 23, 2019 6:00 p.m.
OPEN MEETING MINUTES**

MEETING CALLED BY: Adam Freudberg

MEMBERS PRESENT: Scott Wadland, Adam Freudberg, and Geoff Epstein

MEMBERS ABSENT: Tracey Bryant

ALSO PRESENT:

Dr. Robert Tremblay, Superintendent of Schools, Framingham Public Schools

Mr. Scott Penrod, Director of Safety and Security, Framingham Public Schools

Ms. Rochelle Santos, Media & Communications Manager, Framingham Public Schools

Ms. Beth Adler, Moderator, Open and Honest Discourse

Ms. Jennifer Bellemare, Moderator, Government and Community Chat

Ms. Deb Horowitz, Moderator, Open and Honest Discourse

Ms. Lori Moser, Government and Community Chat

Ms. Jennifer Moshe, Moderator, Framingham Neighbors

Ms. Nicole Siswick, Moderator, Framingham Family Network

1. Call to Order

Mr. Freudberg called the meeting to order at 6:08 p.m. and mentioned that the meeting was being audio recorded, per School Committee policy.

2. Public Comment

None

3. Discussion with Social Media Page Moderators on School Topics and Procedures

Mr. Freudberg reviewed the reason for this agenda item to facilitate conversation between moderators and FPS as part of the continued efforts to improve communications. He mentioned that other groups such as Framingham Families for Racial Equity in Education, Where's the Bus, and Chat About the Schools were also invited and may join in progress.

Ms. Santos begin to recap her role. She said the 2015 Communications Task Force report guided her initial efforts to seek improvements in all areas of communication. Her goals are to have a standard operating procedures document to ensure that FPS is always focused on being proactive, transparent, ensuring translations, focusing on website user experiences, and being consistent. Instagram, YouTube, and video content is a long-term goal to improve and have valuable content.

Dr. Tremblay discussed his vision to be clear and transparent, and reviewed the challenges of communicating out decisions in his role. EEE and the Board of Health's guidance to not send students outside for recess was an example given which he used as a case study. He also discussed relations with the Framingham Teachers Union (FTA), and how he seeks to communicate with staff both during school visits, biweekly FTA meetings, and in public. He also discussed ways to solve problems in the most collaborative way possible. Working with multiple bus vendors was discussed as a way to look at solving the transportation problem.

Ms. Adler and Ms. Horowitz mentioned that tagging Rochelle is very helpful because she is responsive and she can offer official statements from FPS on Facebook. Ms. Santos mentioned there is a list on the FPS website with resources of where do I call. Ms. Adler and Ms. Horowitz suggested that she distribute it to the Facebook groups and PTOs. Ms. Moshe said when Rochelle comments, it typically changes the comment feed and helped calm tensions.

Ms. Hurowitz mentioned that moderators speak up both as moderators, but also as parents to convey their own experiences when chats come up. She said the Open and Honest Discourse page has been in existence for five years now and the amount of chats seems to have ramped up. She added that as moderators they often chat off the comment feeds to learn more context and help provide facts for the community. Ms. Adler added that people are going to Facebook first and are not starting at the teacher and/or principal level first.

Ms. Siswick mentioned that the Framingham Family Network occasionally closes threads when they are so far away from the main post. Additionally, she said they often lose the value if other factually based information is out there, so by closing comments it helps facts get out there in better ways. She said she wants to add to the FPS messaging and said the communications coming from the schools are important and beneficial.

Ms. Moshe suggested that where a situation arises, FPS saying something versus nothing can only help to show that they are on it, and that more information will come when they are able.

Ms. Adler suggested to not go to the media first, use FPS channels to get the message out. Discussion occurred on how Rochelle worked to get the process right and do all possible for the district to get the first message out and not learn from the media on a topic.

*Dr. Tremblay departed for a family commitment at 6:32 p.m.

Mr. Epstein discussed ways to use facts and post them on the FPS website so they can be linked to on Facebook.

Moderators discussed their goals to have residency requirements, as well as the challenges to confirm that all participants live in Framingham.

Ms. Horowitz discussed how great it is for Framingham Neighbors to have a lot of members from the downtown area. She also commented on how moderators need to encourage respectful and polite dialogues, and will remind people their words are always going to be posted.

Ms. Moshe raised the transportation communications challenge and suggested additional follow up about busing changes.

Ms. Adler suggested that Rochelle look at the Class specific pages for each year across Middle Schools, as well as FHS to ensure there are no missed opportunities to get news out.

4. Promoting School Events

Back to School Picnic promotion on how to create awareness across the entire city was discussed briefly.

5. Communications Plan/Press Release to Highlight Recent Progress in Student Achievement Across the District

Ms. Santos mentioned that the MCAS and Accountability press release is actually coming out tomorrow, September 24th. Her analysis was that the data is mixed, yet mostly good around student achievement. Mr. Wadland mentioned the decline in attendance, and was pleased improving this area was on the Superintendent's list of 2019-2020 school year goals. Mr. Epstein asked where on the website will MCAS results live, so in a few months when the press release is no longer featured it can still be found. He suggested an overall FPS FAQ document on the website be considered. Ms. Santos discussed ways the website can be searched and how to keep relevant material easily accessible.

6. Crisis Communication Plan for Schools

This item was taken out of order and discussed after the moderator portion concluded to support Mr. Penrod's schedule.

Mr. Penrod discussed the follow up from the spring incident outside of McAuliffe Charter School with police involvement and what FPS had learned from it. What resulted from that incident was a pre packaged statement/guidance translated to notify stakeholders. Mr. Penrod outlined the chain of command for communications worked out with the police department, and discussed a FPS crisis app for staff to use. Mr. Wadland asked what devices are being used for the crisis app. Mr. Penrod mentioned that the communications go to personal phones, but there

is no charge and to date all staff have been pleased. Mr. Wadland praised the proactive communication from FPS last week about the video situation at FHS. Mr. Penrod and Ms. Santos discussed the ramped up effort with all FPS departments and principals, as well as municipal departments to increase this plan. Mr. Penrod mentioned that state officials will be coming to Walsh in October to promote a grant for security and discuss these type of topics. There is also a parent led meeting planned this fall to discuss crisis communication plans. Mr. Freudberg mentioned it is important for the community to first of all know there is a crisis communications plan. Ms. Santos mentioned a new Blackboard app is being rolled out to offer more specific communication options for stakeholders.

7. Translation Services for the District

Mr. Freudberg asked how translation services were going, and asked if teachers were getting the right level of support with their requests. Mr. Wadland asked if the quality of the translations through the Smore platform were assessed. Ms. Santos said they were and FPS staff have guidance on how to write for it.

8. Initial Conversation about FY21 Media and Communications Department Budget

\$54,000 operating budget was added last year, but a new staff member for the department was not included in the FPS budget request. Ms. Santos outlined what she has been using this funding for, which included apps, professional development, and monitoring. Mr. Epstein said that he believes Ms. Santos needs another person and that most of FPS' problems can be solved with improved communications. Mr. Wadland asked how she was handling all of her responsibilities, and noticed she needs some support to respond in a timely manner. Ms. Santos believes that it is a priority, she has provided a job description, and this may come forward in or before the FY21 budget process. Mr. Penrod commented that she supports almost every other department.

9. Approval of Minutes from March 19, 2019

Motion to Approve: Mr. Epstein

Second: Mr. Wadland

Approved 3-0

10. Adjourn

Motion to Adjourn: Mr. Wadland

Second: Mr. Epstein

Approved 3-0

The meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

Meeting Documents: Draft Minutes from March 19, 2019

These minutes were approved by the Framingham School Committee in Open Session on December 18, 2019.

These minutes were sent to the City of Framingham for posting on December 20, 2019