

November 7, 2019

Report to the Sharon Board of Education

By: Bob Whelan – Region One Board of Education representative from Sharon, Connecticut

At the November 2019 Board Meeting, these initiatives and presentations were the key focus:

- Dr. Vogel China Trip
- Janet Carlson of 111 Group
- FEARLESS presentation
- Tom Mooney (Shipman & Goodwin) on FOI timeline
- New courses
- Policy updates

Dr. Vogel made a trip to China as a member of an invited delegation of School Superintendents. The possibility of developing relationships in the context of educational pursuits is both a local and national initiative that deserves pursuit, as improved understanding between the cultures and personal connections will create benefits that are hard to quantify today. There is much to be learned and shared in both directions, and the possibility of having teachers and students involved in exchange opportunities is a beneficial goal.

Janet Carlson of the 111 Group made a presentation regarding progress to date with the logo, arrangements for the Open House and the website. The development of the 'why HVRHS' construct has evolved, and the Board is excited that a concerted effort is taking place that points up the incredible array of educational opportunities that exist at HVRHS given its size. 111 Group will give proof to the contention that HVRHS is an awesome choice for students regardless of their interests or desired career paths.

Zy Huggan and Myah Baird brought the Board up to speed on an initiative they put together called F.E.A.R.L.E.S.S.. The acronym has significance, and actually speaks directly to the mission (although I cannot remember what the acronym stands for at the moment). Essentially, these resourceful young people recognized a need for an organization that is founded, staffed and managed by students, and gives students of all grades a forum to speak up about concerns or suggestions in a non-judgmental environment that is not 'monitored' by a teacher or administrator. It seemed to be an organization by students and for students to allow for relationships to be built, as it particularly encourages relationships between students at all grade levels. More than anything else, the program will allow students to nurture their confidence level about speaking to groups and in public. The Board was very encouraging, and praised these young people for their initiative and trying to fill a gap in the community at HVRHS.

Tom Mooney, the Region One attorney of record from Shipman & Goodwin spoke to the timeline of events related to the FOI requests, in an attempt to set the record straight. The work involved in producing the broad request was highlighted, and particularly it was explained that many attempts were made to focus the requests on specific topics. Unable to bring a clearer focus to the FOI requests, the fulfillment of the requests has been judged to be adequate from a 'time spent' and 'production to date' perspective. The process of document production is particularly involved, as it involves thousands of emails with simply from-to date requests. As the FOI mediator expressed, the production could take 'years' given the breadth of the requests – clearly at taxpayer cost, ultimately. Hiring a person specifically for working on the requests and the budget ramifications were discussed.

A new series of classes were approved for the 20/21 school year, again reinforcing why this is a great time to be in school. The actual courses being taught will depend on sign-ups, a process which will begin relatively soon. Courses include Engineering, Coding & Design, Science Fiction and the Social Sciences and Companion Animal Management (an ECE course). These are all future looking courses that will certainly prepare our students for the rapidly evolving job market!

A series of policies were reviewed by the Policy Committee. In some cases, they are updates, and in others, the policies were put forth after the audit was performed by CABE and gaps in the policy library were noted. Jennifer Weigel of Salisbury has been the spearhead on the Board in insuring that Region One conforms to both best practice and the fundamental needs insofar as Policy is concerned. As Policy is a primary responsibility of the Board, we are all grateful for the painstaking work involved in wordsmithing these policies that make them clear and less subject to interpretation.

Lastly, we bid goodbye to Jennifer Weigel and Doug Humes, who have been generous with their time and input on the Region 1 Board! It's hard to see Board members move on, as we all appreciate the amount of time it takes for a Board member to 'come up to speed' on the process in general and the local issues in their context. We wish them well and thank them for their public service!

Please feel free to email or call with any questions or comments.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bob Whelan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Bob Whelan
Region One Board of Education Representative from Sharon, Connecticut
rwhelan@region1schools.org
860-364-0452