Concord School Board
City and Community Relations Committee

Date: April 17, 2019

Committee members present: Liza Poinier, Chair, Barb Higgins, Danielle Smith, Pam Wicks

Other School Board members present: Tom Croteau, Nancy Kane, Jim Richards, Jennifer Patterson

Administration: Terri Forsten, Superintendent

Liza Poinier called the meeting to order at 5:50 p.m. and reviewed the agenda, including discussion of the proposal for a Communications Director position, goal-setting for the Committee, connecting with the City of Concord Public Information Officer, and discussion of the District brochure.

The job description for a proposed Communications Director position included:

- Manages day-to-day activities related to community relations in direct support of developing media relations and public relations programs
- The Director also coordinates, supports school leadership teams monitoring and guiding our print, broadcast and emerging media
- Works to strengthen internal and external communications and stakeholder engagement for the District with a focus on developing and recommending communication strategies, to assist with developing targeted communication plans
- Crafts messages to support and communicate key initiatives, programs, decisions, and/or events in the District
- Maintains and enhances the public’s understanding of the District’s work and many accomplishments
- Assists communication in the event of emergencies at schools, in the community or other situations requiring immediate response with media, families and the community
- Develops and implements effective communication and marketing strategies to promote programs, initiatives, operations, decisions, and accomplishments, tailoring strategies to the subject matter and targeted audiences including families as well as business, civic, government and community organizations
- Leads efforts to generate media coverage and implements standards for reviewing and responding to media requests for information, ensuring coordination within program offices and schools as needed.
- Provides consultation, advice and assistance to administrators as needed to help formulate school and department communications.
• Develops, coordinates and facilitates communication training as needed to build greater
capacity among staff and administrators, as well as among public relations liaisons in
schools and departments, to effectively communicate the work and accomplishments of
the District.
• Coordinates and assists the development of communication materials including print,
video, web, multi-media presentations, special events and other communication
activities.
• Improve website navigation, review social media and television presence
• Improve ready access to School Board meetings on the website
• Host a Legislative Breakfast this year
• Consider how to advocate for building aid

Superintendent Forsten suggested that the emphasis on this position as marketing the
District schools was incorrect; as a public school district, students are not recruited to the
District.

Barb Higgins noted that, as a parent and taxpayer, she would want to hear from the
Superintendent directly – not someone trained to shape messaging as a product. She noted
that, with the significant number of talented people in the District, one individual in each
building could be paid a stipend to develop marketing materials and messages. She
suggested re-thinking the goal, and possibly contracting for crisis planning.

Nancy Kane noted that the actual crafting of messages, not necessarily the delivery, is an
important part of this role. In some cases these messages could protect the District, a
teacher or student.

Jennifer Patterson suggested the Committee continue discussing the specific functions of
this position at future meetings. She noted that several parts of this position could be filled
by teachers in the schools, but developing plans for exigent crisis communications is
challenging.

Tom Croteau said that it is still unclear to him exactly what the Board would want this
person to do. He suggested that this person might also assist with the Board’s long-term
strategic plan.

Superintendent Forsten noted that the proposed job description was derived and
customized from another school district and a communications firm, and that the job title
could change.

Pam Wicks suggested a comparative analysis of similar jobs in public school districts in the
state. She said that this person could also develop legislative and policy stances for the
Board, for example building aid and adequacy aid.

Ms. Higgins suggested the possibility of a shared position with the City.

Ms. Kane suggested that grant-writing, or research related to grants, could be part of this
position.
Jim Richards remarked that communication with parents about what happens in the schools is needed, and that this could also open a communications path with taxpayers.

The Committee discussed the District website and social media presence.

There was discussion about whether the Board might take positions on legislative matters related to building aid, adequacy aid or other education-related issues. Ms. Patterson suggested that the full Board might take up this question, and there was further discussion of the manner in which this might happen. Concern was expressed about whether this non-partisan Board might take positions on political issues.

Stefanie Breton is the new Public Information Officer for City of Concord. Ms. Poinier suggested having her attend a future Committee meeting to discuss ways to collaborate in furthering the District’s mission.

Superintendent Forsten noted that the District could buy an advertisement in the Chamber of Commerce 2019 Greater Concord Guidebook. Ms. Poinier suggested that the Chamber should include content about Concord public schools without charge.

The Committee discussed the draft District brochure. Superintendent Forsten said she felt that this project was started with great intentions but requires greater focus and time. She noted that both the Chamber of Commerce and the NH Association of Realtors could include this product in their materials. Ms. Poinier suggested hiring a professional designer and editor to revamp the brochure. Mr. Richards suggested taking some of the material developed for the brochure and including it on the District website.

Ms. Poinier discussed creating a schedule of topics for the weekly radio interview with Chris Ryan of WKXL.

It was noted that the City & Community Relations Committee was scheduled to meet with City administrators and City Council members twice a year.

The Committee set the date for its next meeting on May 15.

The Committee voted 4-0 to adjourn (motioned by Ms. Higgins, seconded by Danielle Smith).

The meeting adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Liza Poinier, Chair
Terri Forsten, Recorder