

MONTROSE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT
COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
DISTRICT ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES
MEETING DATE: SEPTEMBER 29, 2011 7:00 P.M.

Community Advisory Committee Meeting

29 SEPTEMBER 2011

Community Advisory Committee Members Present: Diana Bean, Nick Salamone, Richard Jordan, Marion O'Malley, David Plank, Bill Host, Eric Powers

Administration Present: Mike Ognosky and Jim Tallarico

Board Members Present: Kathy Mordovancey and Gloria Smith

Visitors Present: Mike Boccella (HS Dean of Students)

Meeting commenced at 7:00 PM.

Items Discussed:

- I. Mike Ognosky took the roll and noted the attendance as listed above. He also welcomed Marion O'Malley and Nick Salamone to the Committee and had everyone present introduce themselves.
- II. Old Business: The following item was presented under Old Business
 - **Update on 2011-2012 Calendar:** Mr. Ognosky reviewed the current status of makeup days required due to the flooding this fall. Currently, the District has lost 3 days to weather and has already made a change in the current school calendar making Monday, October 10, 2011 a full day of school for students and teachers. Mr. Ognosky further explained that there is consideration for making Friday, December 23rd the second makeup day and scheduling a full day for teachers and students. Discussion ensued and the group felt that utilizing that day as a makeup day would be fine. Mr. Ognosky will also discuss this with the Student Liaison Committee and the Board of Directors with possible action at the October Board meeting to amend the school calendar to reflect Friday, December 23rd as a full day of school.

III. New Business: The following items were discussed under New Business:

- **Procedures Regarding Accidents That Occur in Traveling To and From School:** Mr. Ognosky related to the committee that on the morning of the second day of school this year there were two accidents that affected bus arrival at school. The first accident reported involved one of our school vans while it was traveling on Route 706 and preparing to make a left hand turn on to High School Road. This accident occurred at the height of morning traffic as buses, etc., were arriving at school. The second accident occurred on Route 167 and involved one of our students on a motorcycle colliding with a motor vehicle. That also held up bus traffic heading to school. The second accident was very serious and resulted in life threatening injuries to one of our students. One of our buses passed the scene and exposed students to a very serious accident involving a classmate. Mr. Ognosky then distributed the current district procedures regarding the reaction of the staff and administration to an accident and guidelines to follow. Given that there were two accidents, there was some miscommunication and initially the High School staff was unaware of the serious nature of the second accident. The students from the bus arrived in school, signed in and went to class. The procedures are clear that the mental well being of those students affected by the observation of the accident should be addressed. We discovered the circumstances of the second accident only after a student came forward to discuss it with the administration. A concern has been raised regarding the handling of the situation and the procedures have been reviewed and reemphasized. Also, at the next Transportation Committee meeting the importance of accurate reporting of incidents will be emphasized to ensure that a miscommunication will not occur again.
- **Mr. Boccella, Dean of Students, Junior-Senior High School:** Mike Boccella, new Dean of Students at the Junior-Senior High School, introduced himself and reviewed the points of emphasis he has had with the students during the early days of the school year. His primary emphasis has been on the issues brought forward at the end of last year regarding the dress code. He felt by having individual class meetings and clearly explaining the “do’s and don’ts” of the current dress code he could head off issues before they became major concerns. He thanked the students for how well he has been accepted in his new role and explained that, although there have been a few challenges, the students have been very positive in accepting the points of emphasis. He also explained that one of his major goals was to be a very visible presence throughout the school during the school day and has worked hard to do so. Finally, he has worked at developing mechanisms that ensure quick and accurate communication between the staff and him. He feels that is imperative in providing a consistent enforcement of all discipline procedures. Members present were very positive regarding the first few weeks of school and, hopefully, that will continue. The issues of the difficulty of purchasing appropriate clothes was discussed and felt it should not be an issue as there are enough suppliers of clothes that are well within the guidelines of our current dress code.

IV. Open Forum: Items of discussion during the open forum included the following:

- The issue of ‘communication’ between the schools and the parents was discussed. It is felt that there are times when there is a disconnect in that line of communication. Specifically, is there a specific chain of command that a parent should follow when addressing a problem? For example, when a parent feels they are following the appropriate chain of command and discuss an issue with a teacher and feel it has not been addressed, where do they go? Mr. Ognosky explained there is such a chain of command and appropriate procedure from the teacher, to the principal, to the superintendent. It was suggested that such information should be placed on the website and communicated to parents so they have an understanding of that process.
- A discussion was held regarding ‘bullying’ in school and what options there are for students who feel they are being bullied. Mr. Tallarico explained there are guidance counselors available and that the High School has a very active Peer Mediation group that continually works with students who feel they are being bullied. The District has a Harassment Form that is also utilized in this situation and can result in the “bully” being referred to the Probation Department. In response to where a student can go to complete such a form, Mr. Ognosky explained that each principal has it and sits with a student to complete it. It was suggested that some students may be hesitant to go to a principal for such action and perhaps there are other locations they could go to complete the form. Suggestions included the Guidance Department, Health Office, Library, Cafeteria, or, perhaps an on line form. The administration will investigate those additional options and Mr. Ognosky will report back to the group at the October meeting under “Old Business”.
- A question was asked of the High School Administration concerning the new Advanced Placement procedures put in place last year regarding placement in the classes, taking of the exam, etc. The understanding was that all students in Advanced Placement classes would be required to take the exam and, apparently that was not the case. Mr. Ognosky will investigate and report back to the committee as an “Old Business” item in October.
- A suggestion was made regarding the development of a “community portal” on the district website where the administration could place much of the information that was discussed at this evenings meeting out on the webpage for community members to access. Such information as effective communication measures, an overview of current district procedures and successes, a place for community members to register concerns, etc., could all be part of the “community portal”.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 27, 2011 in the Faculty Room at the Choconut Valley Elementary School.

Submitted by

Mike Ognosky