

Island Parents Advisory Council on Special Education

Minutes Meeting held Feb. 13, 2014

Meeting got underway at approximately 6:30 p.m. at the culinary arts dining room at the regional high school.

Those in attendance included Kara Merry, Marit Bezahler, Alexandra Welch, Kim Leaird, Kate DeVane, Phil Campbell, Amy Houghton, Connie Berry, Laura Silber, Mandy Tomkins, Mary Yancey, Alecia Barnes, Olivia Hull (press), Janet Sylvia, Lorna Welch, Brian Welch, Kevin McGrath and Jean Neble.

The executive committee distributed new proposed bylaws for review by the council with explanation that the change means there will be three co-chairs rather than one chair.

Co-chair Kate DeVane described what the IPAC's purpose is, reminding the council that they are there to support each other, provide input regarding the education of their children and to help inform policy. It was noted that the IPAC is a state-mandated entity that has not been in place at Island schools effectively for some time.

After informally polling parents at the previous IPAC meeting regarding what issues they consider most important, it was determined that transitioning, afterschool programming, person-centered planning and the IPAC's role as an advocacy group were most mentioned.

Planning a workshop as soon as possible surrounding the laws and rights of students with disabilities and their families was discussed. It was determined that a few members will focus on arranging that event.

Presence on the All Island School Committee, as well as the individual school committees was discussed. Phil Campbell agreed to get the IPAC on the April agenda of the school committee meeting. The suggestion was made to invite the school committee to the IPAC's next meeting in order to help spread awareness about the group's existence.

Creating a website for the IPAC was also discussed. Kim Leaird agreed to develop the site as corresponding secretary. Appropriate links to schools and resources was discussed.

Phil Campbell discussed his plan to evaluate the special education programming currently in place at the schools, including the high school life skills program and the Bridge program. Kate DeVane said the IPAC would like to be involved in discussion and evaluation of these programs.

Phil Campbell said the decision had been made to add a new Bridge program in West Tisbury for grades K-4 and to change the Project Headway program from West Tisbury to Oak Bluffs. He noted he would be meeting with special education faculty, service coordinators and staff soon.

Discussion then moved to the IPAC being not only concerned about where the these programs will be located, but also concerned about what the programs look like.

Discussion then returned to developing a workshop as soon as possible for parents to provide education about the laws but to also provide them with some training or information on relative topics.

It was suggested that the IPAC could reach out to Christine Riley (an educational advocate) and also to Kathi Hackett at Community Services for guidance, or perhaps other professionals at the state Dept. of Education.

Co-chair Amy Houghton suggested an agenda be developed for subsequent IPAC meetings to include topics parents would like to address and/or discuss.

The IPAC then voted to adopt the new bylaws as amended.

Phil Campbell passed out a questionnaire saying that he is asking for input from stakeholders to help him determine what his goals will be for the next one to five years.

There was some discussion about getting the superintendent's approval of flyers advertising upcoming meetings. Apparently the superintendent requires three weeks' notice to approve a flyer.

A meeting date of March 19 at 6:30 p.m. was set and then the meeting was adjourned.