



# Communication and Engagement Subcommittee - Commission on the Future of Public Education in Vermont

September 16, 2024, 8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.

## Microsoft Teams Virtual Meeting

Call In: 1-802-828-7667

Conference ID: 566 719 826#

## DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

**Subcommittee Members:** Meagan Roy, Chair; Oliver Olsen, Vermont Independent Schools Association; John Castle, Vermont Rural Education Collaborative; Jeff Fannon, VT-National Education Association; Jay Nichols, Vermont Principals' Association.

**Agency of Education (AOE):** Zoie Saunders, Shelley Matz, Rose Neddo, Maureen Gaidys.

**Others:** John Clifford, Allen Gilbert, Bob Thibault, Dr. Mary Gannon, Elizabeth St. James, Erica Prudente, Jack Hoffman, Matthew DeGroot, Michale Moser, Chelsea Bray, Chelsea Myers,

### Call to Order, Introductions and Roll Call, Amendments to the Agenda

Chair Roy called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m. and took roll call: Fannon, Castle, Nichols were present as well as Interim Secretary Saunders.

### Approve Meeting Minutes from August 29, 2024

Fannon moved to approve the minutes; Nichols seconded. Chair Roy called the vote. The motion carried.

### Public to be Heard

John Clifford: commented that the Communications and Engagement subcommittee is one of the key elements of the Commission based on last year's lack of communication strategy from local school boards. He spoke about the importance of effective communication and urged the subcommittee to include some norms for boards to follow on better education of what the spending measures mean.

Dr. Mary Gannon: thinking about the importance of the subcommittee, she thinks this is a great opportunity to think about the community folks that are brought to this conversation. She remained concerned about the lack of diverse demographic across the Commission

and the subcommittees. Need to bring in voices that are not represented on the Commission.

There were no amendments to the agenda.

### **Working Session**

- Discussion of Communication and Engagement Framework
- Community Conversation Planning – October 7<sup>th</sup>
- Review/refinement of RFP
- Develop schedule for monthly summaries

Chair Roy said the first topic would be the discussion on the Communication and Engagement consultant. The Commission adopted the recommendation of this subcommittee to secure a consultant. The Commission didn't have much discussion on the draft RFP as it was important to hear about the Agency process for Request for Proposals (RFPs).

Interim Secretary Saunders asked about the important next step of being concrete on what the scope of work should be for the consultant and how that consultant will engage, and what information will be gathered and presented. She added that it is also important to have the consultant be organized to coordinate with subject matter experts (SMEs) in the AOE and the field. Expectations need to be clearly articulated on how the consultant will engage with SMEs at the AOE, in the community and in the field.

Chair Roy said the draft outlines the challenge of specificity to review the framework developed, that the subcommittee knows they need to engage all 14 counties, that every meeting is an opportunity for engagement, want some input opportunity (survey) for those who cannot attend in person, also an equity lens and help the subcommittee to understand if this is correct approach.

There was discussion on having someone at the initial stage to guide the work, open to consultant offering options not yet considered, value in helping local communities in their communication and engagement, adding additional detail that could generate robust proposals but also leave it open ended, using focus groups, training materials (training in a box), production of media releases, thinking of the phases and specific deliverables with a concrete timeline, challenge of the engagement work is that it needs to dovetail with content expertise, organized and intentional communication, having this work be adaptive and able to evolve, Commission determined that Communication and Engagement consultant is required, AOE is the vehicle for procurement but it is not AOE's role to define what is needed, slowing the process down is not desirable, need someone with an equity lens, developing the scope of work around a budget.

Matz spoke about the RFP process, which is an internal AOE process and doesn't require any outside approvals. To review draft and review bids is about a 4–6-week process. Depending on the dollar amount of the contract, the contract review and approvals can take another 4-6 weeks. The RFP can be open-ended and ask the bidders to provide guidance

on what they can offer. The contract needs specific work that is not open-ended. Matz said there is an RFP template that can be shared with the subcommittee. It contains a lot of state requirements.

Interim Secretary Saunders said the committee should think about how the procurement process works in terms of the review committee, and that it is fine to move forward and accelerate this first phase of the timeline, but when we get to contract negotiations that will need more time to think about the budgeting aspects of the contract.

There was discussion on how much money is appropriated to this Commission, affirm connecting with the Education Finance subcommittee on this topic, if the appropriation was specified for the consultant or a specific subcommittee,

Chair Roy recapped what should be added to the RFP – more specificity around a global number of engagement sessions, adding that we want assistance writing media releases on a regular basis, and including developing resources/communications for school districts to utilize with their communities. Chair Roy offered to recirculate a revised RFP to subcommittee members and asked them to provide feedback by September 20, 2024 so that she can get this to Matz at AOE.

### **Confirm Next Meeting/Meeting Schedule**

Chair Roy reminded the members that locations will be rotated; she asked if subcommittee members thought the subcommittee should wait for a consultant before starting the community engagement sessions.

There was discussion on waiting and/or moving forward, RFP process is months out, perception of the public, what information will be shared out at these meetings, ensuring that the Commission gathers and reports on its own identified data sets and does not solely rely on AOE data, some have identified some problems with AOE data, importance of having accurate information, being careful about what information is shared, being clear about gathering information and what will be shared as it is collected, simple input opportunity with guiding questions for October, each session will build on the last, informing the public about the Commission's work, and the most important piece is to have this process/approach be authentic (even if it is messy).

Chair Roy asked for someone to create an outline for the October session. Castle offered to do a first draft and Fannon offered to collaborate with him.

There was discussion on meeting before October 7, 2024 and what date and time might work best. The subcommittee decided to meet next on Wednesday, October 2, 2024, at 8:00 a.m. Chair Roy asked AOE to send recurring meeting invites for the Communication and Engagement subcommittee to meetings on the third Monday of the month from 8-9:00 a.m. There was discussion on how to get the word out and if AOE would be the conduit for communication. Castle asked at the next subcommittee meeting to spend some time reviewing what data would be shared at the engagement sessions and that is specific to the Commission. There was discussion on timing and duration. The subcommittee decided

to propose a 5-7:00 p.m. timeframe for the convening. Communication will be pushed out to AOE channels and then to Commission members for distribution to their channels.

### **Public to be Heard**

Dr. Mary Gannon: noted that in the spirit of supporting this work through an equity lens, October 7 is the one-year commemoration of the attack on Israel and thinks it would benefit the Commission to rethink this date. She added that there are many events already scheduled to commemorate that event and that could be a potential conflict.

John Clifford: He didn't realize the Commission's communications were focused on its own work rather than on communication support for local school budgets around the state. He commented there was no education from his local school board leading up to the budget vote.

Chair Roy said she was aware of the anniversary of the of the attack on Israel and that she would be discussing changing the date from October 7 for the Community Engagement date with the Steering Group at its next meeting.

### **Adjourn**

Nichols moved to adjourn; Fannon seconded. Chair Roy called the vote. The meeting adjourned at 9:00 a.m.

Minutes prepared by Maureen Gaidys.