

SEPAC Meeting Minutes August 9, 2018

Location: Chelmsford High School, Learning Commons

Board Members Present: 3

Ali Barnes, Co-Chair

Kristen Eriksen, Co-Chair

Jane Zhao, Treasurer

Director of Student Services: Amy Reese- Not Present

School Committee Liaison: Donna Newcomb- Not Present

Other Members: Approx 4 members present

SEPAC sign in sheet filed in Secretary SEPAC binder

Handouts:

Agenda, Meeting Minutes, SEPAC School Liaison duties, True Colors Flyer

Please note: Meeting was scheduled to occur in Learning Commons at CHS, but the building was unavailable. We chose to meet outside of the front entrance to CHS on benches.

Meeting called to order by Ali Barnes at 7:15 PM.

Ali announced that 3 Board members present-Ali, Kristen and Jane. Ali asked for a volunteer take minutes, Kristen Eriksen offered to do so.

Agenda item: listed in accordance to posted agenda sheet format.

Before beginning meeting agenda topics, Kristen and Ali discussed that they would like to better define the structure of SEPAC meetings. Keeping everyone's valuable time in mind, we respectfully ask that comments, questions and input be no longer than 3 minutes, and occur after the scheduled person(s) are done speaking. As co-chairs, we also intend to try to be aware of this and act as timekeepers to avoid interruptions and keep our meetings on track.

1. Approve minutes from June meeting

Suggestions for amendments - none. Motion: Approved minutes.

2. Liaison Update:

a. Define role of liaison's: "Role of Liaisons" as stated in proposed bylaw draft: The Liaisons of this organizations assist the SEPAC board by ensuring the most current information is accessible to special ed families within their school.

There was a document that was distributed October 2017 that defined liaison roles as above. However, the responsibilities on that form were, in part, not followed and not written and approved by SEPAC members as a group. If we do not come to an agreement on what liaison roles will be tonight, then we will use the previously submitted responsibilities from October 2017.

From Attleboro SEPAC website:

School Liaison responsibilities:

- Act as liaison between his/her school and SEPAC.
 - Connect with school's PTO and share SEPAC information.
 - Communicate SEPAC information to his/her school.
 - Build awareness at his/her school of SEPAC and SEPAC events.
 - Support the SEPAC Programs coordinator by volunteering for at least one SEPAC event.
- Attend SEPAC meetings and provide status updates and feedback to SEPAC Board.

Out of District Liaison responsibilities:

- Act as liaison between Out of District families and SEPAC.
- Communicate SEPAC information to the Out of District community.
- Support the SEPAC Programs coordinator by volunteering for at least one SEPAC event.
- Attend SEPAC meetings and provide status updates and feedback to SEPAC Board.

Liaisons are not SEPAC Board members, but they serve a valuable role in increasing communication and collaboration between SEPAC and the community. Liaisons are appointed and removed as agreed during a meeting. A liaison may also resign by informing the SEPAC Board. Liaison roles are filled in the best interest of the SEPAC and can be filled throughout the year. SEPAC is not required to have Liaisons. Liaisons are encouraged to attend SEPAC meetings, but if they cannot attend a meeting, they may communicate any updates to the Chair in advance. The SEPAC Board may create additional Liaison roles (and define the eligibility requirements) if they determine there is a need.

Question: Do we want to amend the current bylaws to include this definition & responsibilities of liaisons? The alternate option is that we would approve this as a policy and keep the information in the secretary binder. Putting it in the bylaws makes it easy to find and follow; putting it in the secretary binder with our minutes will make it more difficult to find.

Jaimie stated that she does what is listed in the initial description and the Attleboro description already. She initially shared email address, but now would like to change this due to privacy concerns. Ali mentioned that we could make one email account for all liaison's and redirected to whomever would have the information for that parent.

Beth stated that, as the liaison at the HS, there is very little for her to do. The guidance staff and deans cover most issues. She would like to see more related to post HS options. She feels that by HS, most parents are not as involved. The students are older and make their own decisions. Ali and Kristen discussed looking into more ways to support HS students as they near graduation, like resource fairs or workshops re colleges.

Kristen brought up discussion that although it would be great for liaisons to volunteer at events, it should not be required. All present agreed to remove that from our liaison description.

Currently, Chelmsford SEPAC does not have an Out of District Liaison, but it may be an important addition to make. We would need to discuss this with Administration before adding this position, so we suspended this for now, and will discuss with Amy Reese and other coordinators.

All members discussed the bulleted points in Attleboro liaison description, and decided upon the following description for Chelmsford liaisons:

School Liaison responsibilities:

- Act as liaison between his/her school and SEPAC.
 - Connect with school's PTO and share SEPAC information.
 - Communicate SEPAC information to his/her school.
 - Build awareness at his/her school of SEPAC and SEPAC events.
- Attend SEPAC meetings and provide status updates and feedback to SEPAC Board.

Is there a motion to accept the liaison positions as stated above, create a liaison email and amend the bylaws to include the liaison position?

Motion 1 by Beth M, Motion 2 by Jaimie D, Voting members include parents of children with special needs in the district: Unanimous, 0 against, 0 abstaining.

b. Accept volunteers to liaison positions: Ali explained that all positions for liaison need to be filled again for the 2018-2019 school year, even if you already held the position last year. She asked who would be interested in positions for this coming year. Beth Morrill stated she will continue for the HS. Jaimie Dillon will continue at Harrington. Mary Ellen Forty, who is a teacher at Chips, asked if she would be able to be the liaison for Chips. Kristen Eriksen will check with Amy Reese .

Please note that the role of liaison can be filled at any time. We will continue accepting volunteers at our October meeting. If you know anyone who would be interested, there will be time on other nights to step in.

Thank you all for offering to take a position with SEPAC and in supporting the students and parents in our district. The board recognizes the following volunteers for SEPAC liaisons and appoints them to the position for the 2018-2019 school year:

Beth Morrill, High School
Jaimie Dillon, Harrington

c. Liaison Updates:

While you may not have information to share today, this will be an agenda item at each meeting. This would be the time to inform the public of events, volunteer opportunities, and to raise awareness of issues

happening at your school, and share good news. If items require further discussion or action, then those items will be added to a later meetings agenda.

Please remember that we are trying to be respectful of people's time and input. Allow the speaker to have the floor, unless they directly ask a question to the group. If you have additional things that you would like to say on a topic, please request that it be added to a later agenda.

Byam, Center, South Row, McCarthy, Parker: Not present

CHIPS: Maryellen Forty brought the welcome bags that she has created. They are small canvas bags in multiple colors (variety of rainbow colors) with information about SEPAC, Special Education, and excerpts from parent comments about Chips and entering the realm of Special Education for the first time. She also included some items for the children including books and bubbles. Thank you so much for putting these together for parents, Mary Ellen!

CHIPS also got approval for a social worker!

Harrington: Jaimie reported that she has met with the new principal. He is open to having SEPAC presence at Open House, and likes the idea of having Sped and specialist staff present as well. He is very big on SEL, and wants to promote social emotional learning concepts at Harrington.

Harrington is also having a court yard cleanup day 8/25. Once cleaned up, they hope to start some gardens in the court yard and have discussed having some pull-out services in the courtyard. Ali mentioned that Roberts field playground group is working on having a sensory garden. Mary Ellen mentioned that they also have a sensory garden at Chips and would be willing to share plants!

High School: Beth has nothing to report, but would like more SEPAC involvement for transition workshops, Q and A workshops related to college and life path options. Ali mentioned that there is a Federation training about transitions, and we could discuss this or other ideas for a roundtable discussion or Q and A workshop.

3. School Committee Update: Not present

4. Public Input: A parent of a second grader had some questions about requesting an evaluation for her child. She has been convinced by the school not to have the eval, stating she won't qualify and won't get services. She had the child evaluated privately and is asking how to proceed in presenting this eval to the school. We recommend contacting the Federation for Children with Special Needs for assistance in pursuing this. SEPAC will follow up with her as well.

5. Old Business

After taking a look through older meeting minutes and speaking with volunteers for positions either in person or via email, the board has decided to appoint volunteers to positions. These are not additional board members, but SEPAC members who will be the point person for certain activities. This will help us to be better organized and spread out the workload a bit, as we are all volunteers.

a. Establish Needs Assessment Survey Subcommittee.

The subcommittee will meet as needed in order to present the finalized survey for distribution approval at the October meeting. This will include: define the purpose, participants, and use of survey information. Once approved, they will distribute the survey and collect the data. A preliminary review of the data collected will be shared at the November meeting. The final report will be presented at the January meeting and should include recommendations for SEPAC and the District. This information will be used in SEPAC's School Committee Presentation.

Jamie has already created a thorough rough draft of the survey. We will need a few people who are able to help finish it up. Jamie - Assuming you will be on the subcommittee if formed, would you like to be the contact person or would you rather people use the sepac email?

Is there a motion to establish a Needs Assessment Survey Subcommittee?

Motion 1 Beth M, Motion 2 Jaimie D, Voting members include parents of children with special needs in the district, those for unanimous, 0 against, 0 abstaining.

b. Appoint Workshop Coordinator

The chairs are responsible for coordinating the activities of the organization, as written in the bylaws. We have had two people express interest in helping to coordinate activities.

We are defining workshop coordinator as a volunteer who is not a board member that plans, schedules, and assists with hosting workshops and speakers.

The board recognizes Amy Domow for workshop coordinator and appoints her to the position for the 2018-19 school year.

c. Appoint Activity Coordinator

We are defining activity coordinator as a volunteer who is not a board member that plans, schedules, and assists with hosting special events.

We have had one parent express interest in this position, but she was unable to commit for starting tonight. So, we will suspend this appointment for a later date when there is a parent that can commit.

d. SEPAC at Open House

As previously discussed. SEPAC will be included in several of the school's Open House. Kristen has been working to coordinate that. Could you please give an update?

Kristen stated that she has received positive feedback from several principals. One concern is that the OH has a very packed schedule with the addition of information about ALICE drills. Center, Harrington and Parker will have SEPAC speak 1-2 mins with a brief explanation of who we are and what we do.

South Row, Byam, and CHIPS are open to flyers, but don't feel they could add a speaker. No response from McCarthy or the High School. Schools are glad to try to post SEPAC info on the TV monitor in the front lobby, just need to contact IT to do it. Dates for OH are listed below.

September 6: Elementary, K-2, 5-615pm

September 6: Elementary, 3-4, 7-815pm

September 12: Parker 7-8, 6-730pm

September 13: McCarthy 5-6, 6-730pm

September 20: CHS, 630-830pm

September 26: Parker, 5-6, 6-730pm

September 27: McCarthy, 7-8, 6-730pm

November 15: CHIPS, 6-8pm

Question: Jamie- Are you able to send us the flier that you made so we can have copies made before Sept 6?

Question: Laurie- You started planning for this several months ago. It would be helpful to be consistent across the district if all of our speakers said a similar message. Do you have a script that you were planning on using a Center? If so, could you share that with Kristen?

If you are interested in volunteering, we will set up an online sign up. Kristen will make sure you have what is needed for the night.

New Business

a. Discussion for an ALEC Coordinator.

ALEC (Autism and Law Enforcement Education Coalition) training helps foster a deeper understanding of Autism Spectrum Disorders among public safety and law enforcement personnel. Training is available for police officers, emergency personnel and firefighters, using curriculum and videos specific to each group.

We know that emergency personnel and CPS staff have all been going through many hours of training related to school safety as the schools switch over to using ALICE protocol for active shooter scenarios. The ALEC training would support further training specific to persons with autism within the school setting and in the community. We need to know if this is viable and applicable to Chelmsford. We wouldn't want to provide redundant training, so at this time this would be a research position.

We are defining ALEC Coordinator as a volunteer who is not a board member that researches current special needs training that Chelmsford's emergency personnel have and the requirements and availability of bringing ALEC training to Chelmsford.

Mary Ellen stated that she may reach out to a few fire fighter parents about this.

Persons who would be interested in this position should contact a board member so that we can add it to a later agenda.

New Items Expected for September Meeting

Our next meeting will be an exciting workshop. Leslie Leslie from the Federation for Children with Special needs is volunteering her time to present this workshop on team building for us.

True Colors Workshop, September 27, 7-9pm - RSVP Requested

Who: SEPAC Members, Chelmsford School Committee Members, Chelmsford Special Education

Administration, When: Thursday, September 27, 2018 7-9PM CHS Learning Commons RSVP:

SEPAC@chelmsford.k12.ma.us by September 20

The next regular SEPAC meeting will be Thursday, October 25 at 7pm.

There being no further business to come before the board, the meeting is adjourned at 8:16 pm.