



**Community Service Task Force  
Meeting Minutes  
September 5, 2007**

Chairperson William Scheirer called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Chairman Scheirer introduced Dr. Joseph Lewis who spoke briefly of the charge of the committee which included: defining Community Service, developing criteria required for agency participation, and developing a process for dealing with transgressions. Dr. Lewis emphasized that the committee was not to debate the value of community service, but rather to refine a good program.

Chairman Scheirer explained "Robert's Rules of Order" and proposed that the committee vote to adopt Robert's Rules of Order for all meetings. A motion was made and second. The motion passed 32 – 0.

Chairman Scheirer handed out seven (7) questions and provided a brief explanation of each question. A motion to change the first question to read, "What is the definition of community service and what is its purpose?" was made by Mrs. Koch and seconded by Mr. Boksan. The amendment passed by a voice vote.

Mr. Billiard asked to know where we currently are with regard to community service. Mrs. Seip provided an explanation of the Community Service Booklet that is distributed to all students upon entering high school. Rather than provide each member with a copy of the book it was suggested that the introduction be sent to all members as part of an e-mail to conserve paper.

Mrs. Koch referred to the lack of "history" for some of the current Board members and provided a brief review for the committee. Mrs. Koch also questioned the use of students as "office support" which was indicated as part of the duties for an organization.

Chairman Scheirer explained that some homework would be required of the committee.

Mr. Williams asked: What was the over riding concern of the current program? Responses focused on some of the problems associated with students who wait until the last minute to turn in their community service hours. A suggestion stated that students should be required to complete a specific number of community service hours each year, or a firm date be developed for graduation inclusion.

Mrs. Durante suggested that the committee be shown the power-point presentation developed by Mrs. Seip that is shown to all students in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Dr. Lewis asked Mrs. Seip to forward that power-point to Ms. Mickolay so it may be posted on the district web site.

Mr. Billiard suggested that a probationary period be developed for new agencies. In this time a process including student feedback and evaluation could be determined. Mrs. Koch supported the idea. Mrs. Seip does send a yearly form for updated information to each agency. Mr. Dolak asked that the agencies also be provided the opportunity to supply the district with feedback concerning the program.

Chairperson Scheirer called for a motion to adopt the questions. A voice vote passed the motion and the questions were adopted.

Question #1 was placed on the table for discussion.

Mr. Robert Fennig, a community member, spoke as to the purpose of community service. From his point of view the purpose of community service is to provide students with the opportunity to serve the community. Mr. Fennig also believes that students are “paid” for their community service in the fact that they receive a diploma. His belief is that students should not get paid for such service. He also spoke of the difference between volunteerism and community service and does not believe the two terms should be used interchangeably.

A question was raised as to the benefit of giving students 15 hours of community service credit for participation in a school related sport, club, or activity. The feeling is that community service should benefit the community at large and not necessarily the closed community of the school. It was also noted that community service is tied to personal values. The committee was asked if the district has ever conducted a survey of students to gain their perspective on community service. In response to the question Chairman Scheirer referenced a report conducted by the *Corporation for National Community Service*. Chairman Scheirer also raised the point that in researching the most active agencies involved in our community service program it appears that a great number of our students do community service for the Bethlehem Area School District. He questioned whether we really want that from the program.

Mr. Dolak responded to the concept that community service is “free labor”. Mr. Dolak shared that the program requires a lot of work on the part of the agencies and is anything but free.

Mr. Felker commented that community service is “priceless”. His belief is that we need to take it out of the political arena. Mr. Felker cited an e-mail he received from his daughter, a Liberty High School graduate, who completed the community service requirement. The e-mail was copied and shared with all members of the committee.

Mrs. Koch informed the committee that there is a federal government definition of community service.

Mr. Miles commented that the definition of community service is tied to what community is being served. Mr. Miles offered a history on the adoption of the program as he was on the committee that investigated the program. According to Mr. Miles there had been an agreement that community service activities would not include the school district as a provider. Mr. Miles cited the Boy Scouts of America as an example of an organization that requires a community service project as part of the Eagle Scout award. Mr. Miles also stipulated that this required community service project could not be completed to the benefit of the Boy Scouts of America. Mr. Miles hopes that looking at the community being served is on the table for discussion.

Mr. Boksan reminded the committee that the community being served is the community of today and not the community of 15 years ago.

Courtesy of the floor was provided for as part of the agenda.

Mr. Felker raised the question as to the frequency of meetings. A discussion took place with a voice vote that meetings will be every two weeks, not every week as previously proposed.

***The next meeting will be Wednesday, September 19, 2007 at 7:00 p.m. in the Superintendent's Conference Room at the Education Center.*** Mr. LaPorta and Mrs. Durante indicated that they would not be able to attend as it is "Open House" night for Freedom and Liberty. This will also prevent other high school representatives from attending the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Dean M. Donaher