

**Minutes**  
**TOWN OF MANSFIELD**  
**COMMUNICATIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
Monday, March 16, 2009  
Audrey P. Beck Building , Conference Room C

Members present: Toni Moran (chair), Joyce Crepeau, Patrick McGlamery, Aline Booth, Richard Pellegrine. (Leila Fecho attempt made with phone hook-up – not successful).

Town staff: Jamie Russell

I. Meeting called to order by Chair Toni Moran at 7:00 pm. An attempt was made to make a phone connection with Leila Fecho in California, but was not successful.

II. Minutes of the Feb. 23 meeting were approved but amended. Chairman Moran will draft a letter to state legislators regarding CGS 9-369. Since this letter was part of the original minutes of Feb. 23, it was left out and a more agreeable letter will be drafted and attached to the minutes of Feb. 23.

III No public comment

IV Old Business

- A. Discussion of the Strategic Plan was postponed until the sub-committee gets a chance to meet.
- B. Jamie Russell reported that the Board of Education had submitted its budget, that the Town Manager will submit his budget and District 19 was working on theirs. The Citizen's Guide to the Budget was sent home via the school students. The communications Advisory Comm. Appreciates the Manager's Office and the Council for providing this guide. It is a handy tool for understanding the budget process and the Budget calendar. There was a lengthy discussion about possible ways to improve the guide. All members of the committee believed that the last page of the guide (the calendar) be the first page on a future guide. The committee also suggested several ways that the guide be condensed so that it would have wider appeal. There were many suggestions made. Patrick McGlamery will attempt to locate a resource who will, with feedback from town officials, try to design a revised document for future use that might be more condensed and streamlined. Face Book and Twitters were discussed as other possible ways to convey information on town fiscal matters. The use of these mediums might be limitless as far as their usefulness in communications. Patrick McGlamery will investigate Face Book's potential and Joyce Crepeau will investigate Twitters'.
- C. Sending letters to Town Council and District 19 Board members suggesting a format to use in informing citizens about all sides and possible options before a referendum was approved. **These letters are an attachment to these minutes.**

- D. The committee authorized its chair to draft a letter to the Council requesting that an alternate member be named to this committee. **This letter is an attachment to these minutes.**
- E. Richard Pellegrine indicated he would be willing to continue to serve on this committee. His term would have expired in March this year.
- V. New Business: none
- VI. Reports: none
- VII. Communications: none
- VIII. Agenda for Next Meeting – April 6
  - A. Strategic Plan Response
  - B. Budget Process
  - C. Graphic Design Report- Twitters, Facebook
- IX. Next Meeting: April 6, 7:00 pm
- X. Meeting adjourned: 8:30 pm

Respectfully submitted  
Richard Pellegrine, Sec. Pro tem

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Below are three letters approved during the meeting as referenced earlier in the minutes.

March 16, 2009

Mansfield Town Council  
4 South Eagleville Rd.  
Storrs CT 06268-2599

Dear Council Members;

The Communications Advisory Committee has 7 members, who serve rotating terms, with expiration dates on March 24. This March, two members terms expire, William Powers and Richard Pelligrini. Mr. Pellegrini would like to remain on the committee. He has been a valuable member, and we welcome his decision. William Powers has expressed a desire to be removed from the Committee. His position will definitely need to be filled.

We have had a serious problem with meeting a quorum. It is a small board, and members get sick, have child care problems, travel, or have work obligations that keep them from attending meetings. We have tried to schedule the committee meetings around those dates when absences can be predicted (i.e., August, late December), but we continue to cancel meetings for lack of attendance.

We would like to request a change in the membership structure of the committee by adding an alternate, who would attend meetings, and vote when a member was

absent. We believe that the alternate would become an active participant in the work of the committee, but that we would still preserve an odd number of votes.

If you would like a presentation from the Committee regarding this request, please let me, or Jaime Russell, know.

Sincerely,  
For the Committee,  
Antonia C. Moran,  
Chair

March 16, 2009

Mansfield Town Council  
4 South Eagleville Rd.  
Storrs, CT 06268-2599

Dear Council Members;

As you know, the Communications Advisory Committee has been charged with finding ways to improve communications between government and citizens in the town of Mansfield. An issue has come to our attention that we believe requires a town ordinance.

C.G.S. §9-369b prohibits all advocacy on behalf of referenda by town officials, or the expenditure of government funds to advocate for a referenda. In order to comply with this statute, the Region 19 Board of Education, acting upon the advice of their bond counsel, removed all information regarding the referendum from their website, with the exception of the motions authorizing the referendum and the actual question to be asked.

In fact, it became nearly impossible for citizens to understand why the Board had chosen to bring this referendum forward at this time. The Board circulated a one page brochure to every household in town describing the referendum, and explaining its benefits, but, to comply with the law, this was done *before* it had formally moved to put the question to the public. There were one or possibly two articles in the **Chronicle**, but other than that, the only information available was the result of direct questions asked of board members or staff. It is hard to imagine that many people took advantage of that opportunity. We believe that most voters made their decisions based on unnecessarily limited information, probably after the information that had informed the Board's decision had been removed from public view.

There is an exception, in §9-369b(d):

(d) Any municipality may provide, by ordinance, for the preparation and printing of concise summaries of arguments in favor of, and arguments opposed to, local

proposals or questions approved for submission to the electors of a municipality at a referendum for which explanatory texts are prepared under subsection (a) or (b) of this section. Any such ordinance shall provide for the establishment or designation of a committee to prepare such summaries, in accordance with procedures set forth in said ordinance. The members of said committee shall be representatives of various viewpoints concerning such local proposals or questions. The committee shall provide an opportunity for public comment on such summaries to the extent practicable. Such summaries shall be approved by vote of the legislative body of the municipality, or any other municipal body designated by the ordinance, and shall be posted and distributed in the same manner as explanatory texts under subsection (a) of this section. Each summary shall contain language clearly stating that the printing of the summary does not constitute an endorsement by or represent the official position of the municipality.

The Communications Advisory Committee strongly recommends that the Council consider passing an ordinance that allows for the creation of a committee to prepare “concise summaries of arguments in favor of, and arguments opposed to, local proposals or questions approved for submission to the electors”.

The same recommendation is being made to the Region 19 Board.

While this will create an additional hurdle to cross before a recommendation can be made to the town, we believe that it is better than an absence of information.

Sincerely,  
For the Committee,  
Antonia C. Moran,  
Chair

March 16, 2009

Region 19 Board of Education  
1235 Storrs Rd.  
Storrs, CT 06268

Dear Members of the Board of Education;

The Mansfield Town Council created the Communications Advisory Committee a year ago, charging it with finding ways to improve communications between government and citizens in the town of Mansfield. An issue has come to our attention that we believe requires action from the Region 19 Board as well as the Town Council.

C.G.S. §9-369b prohibits all advocacy on behalf of referenda by town officials, or the expenditure of government funds to advocate for a referenda. In order to comply with

this statute, the Region 19 Board of Education, acting upon the advice of your bond counsel, removed all information regarding the referendum from your website, with the exception of the motions authorizing the referendum and the actual question to be asked.

In fact, it became nearly impossible for citizens to understand why the Board had chosen to bring this referendum forward at this time. Your board circulated a one page brochure to every household in town describing the referendum, and explaining its benefits, but, to comply with the law, this was done *before* it had formally moved to put the question to the public. There were one or possibly two articles in the **Chronicle**, but other than that, the only information available was the result of direct questions asked of board members or staff. It is hard to imagine that many people took advantage of that opportunity. We believe that most voters made their decisions based on unnecessarily limited information, probably after the information that had informed the Board's decision had been removed from public view.

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The Communications Advisory Committee strongly recommends that the Region 19 Board consider adopting rules that would allow for the creation of a committee to prepare “concise summaries of arguments in favor of, and arguments opposed to, local proposals or questions approved for submission to the electors”.

The same recommendation is being made to the Mansfield Town Council.

While this will create an additional hurdle to cross before a recommendation can be made to the towns, we believe that it is better than an absence of information.

Sincerely,

For the Committee,  
Antonia C. Moran,  
Chair