

ARC/NPC

2012-BRONXVILLE, N Y

REPORT OF THE 2012 ADVISORY REVIEW COMMITTEE OF THE NON-PARTISAN COMMITTEE FOR THE NOMINATION AND ELECTION OF SCHOOL TRUSTEES

The 2012 Advisory Review Committee of the Non-Partisan Committee for the Nomination and Election of School Trustees (“ARC”) was appointed by the 2012 Non-Partisan Committee for the Nomination and Election of School Trustees (“NPC”) for a quadrennial review of the NPC’s policies and procedures. The ARC’s role is to evaluate current procedures and operations of the NPC, including but not limited to, the Plan for the Non-Partisan Nomination and Election of School Trustees (“The Plan”) and The Rules of Procedure of the Non-Partisan Committee (“The Rules”), and make recommendations for possible changes to these procedures and operations to ensure fairness and relevance.

The 2012 ARC consists of seven members of the Bronxville community, all of whom have participated in many community and school related activities. In aggregate members have: 15 years of service as NPC members (including the current and 3 former NPC Chairs); 15 years of service as trustees of the BUFSD (including a former president/current trustee and a former trustee); and, interviewed with the NPC 6 times for the NPC nomination for trustee. The committee also has a member who served on the most recent previous ARC in 2008, as well as the Mayor of the Village of Bronxville who is currently serving her 8th year in that capacity.

The formation of the 2012 ARC was publicized in the local press and the meetings were open to the public. Members of the community attended several 2012 ARC meetings and provided useful input to the committee.

The first meeting of the 2012 ARC was held on February 29, 2012. The committee’s initial discussions focused on establishing rules and voting procedures for the 2012 ARC. Upon completion of organizational issues, committee members engaged in wide-ranging discussions to identify the topics relating to the NPC that the ARC would consider. After considerable discussion, members of the 2012 ARC were assigned individual topics to research and reported back to the committee as a whole. Further discussion ensued on these topics and, when a consensus was reached on a particular topic, a member drafted a position paper detailing the 2012 ARC’s deliberations and recommendations for the review and approval of committee members. All recommendations offered in this report were adopted by unanimous vote of the 2012 ARC members unless otherwise noted.

The following topics were selected for review and consideration by the 2012 ARC:

1. Scarsdale and Edgemont NPC equivalent programs and the applicability of elements of these programs to the NPC;
2. Eligibility criteria to serve on NPC;
3. Eligibility criteria to seek NPC nomination for trustee;
4. Election procedures for candidates seeking to serve on NPC;

5. Voting procedures for NPC selection of nominees to seek election as Trustee of the BUFSD;
6. NPC confidentiality agreement;
7. ARC confidentiality agreement;
8. Keeping NPC members' discussions during committee meetings within the scope of NPC mandate;
9. NPC public relations efforts and ways to increase community awareness and involvement;
10. Addition of a student observer to NPC to participate in meetings which are organizational in nature and which do not include the discussion of confidential or sensitive information
11. Change of NPC calendar to coincide with BUFSD academic year calendar; and.
12. Technical amendments to NPC Rules of Procedure and Plan to address existing inconsistencies.

This report presents the ARC's recommendations which are offered to the NPC for consideration. These recommendations fall into five categories:

1. No changes and, as such, no action is required;
2. Changes to be implemented by NPC Chair;
3. Changes to be implemented by the NPC Chair and which are to be reevaluated by the 2016 ARC;
4. Changes that require an amendment to The Rules. (These changes can be approved by the affirmative vote of not less than 14 members of the NPC); and,
5. Changes that require an amendment to The Plan. (These changes can be initiated by the affirmative vote of not less than 14 members of the NPC, or by the submission of a petition signed by not less than 15 members of the community eligible to vote in NPC elections to the NPC on a "timely basis". Having met at least one of the aforementioned requirements, changes to The Plan require the affirmative vote of the majority of eligible voters who cast votes in the NPC election. Any such proposed changes will be included for vote on the ballot for the 2013 NPC member election.)

1. REVIEW OF EDGEMONT AND SCARSDALE NPC EQUIVALENTS AND APPLICABILITY TO NPC

The 2012 ARC felt it would be useful to consider how other local communities conduct the non-partisan selection of school board members with an eye toward improving the NPC nomination process in Bronxville. Two nearby communities - Edgemont and Scarsdale - were chosen because of their long traditions of using a community-based committee for the non-partisan nomination and election of school board members.

Edgemont

Edgemont's School Board Nominating Committee (SBNC) operates much like Bronxville's NPC and is responsible for recruiting, screening and nominating school board candidates through a nonpartisan process. Unlike Bronxville's committee, which is stand-alone and self-sustaining,

the SBNC is closely tied to the Edgemont Community Council (ECC), whose nine neighborhood associations are each responsible for providing two members to serve on the SBNC. In addition, a high school student is chosen by the school to serve as a SBNC member. (The ECC is a long-standing civic organization that represents the interests of the Edgemont community on a wide variety of Greenburgh town issues.)

The ECC underwrites all SBNC expenses and the ECC President serves as "impartial chairperson" (non-voting) of the SBNC. The Board of Directors of the ECC is responsible for interpretation and enforcement of SBNC by-laws. The SBNC begins its work each year by meeting with the school board president and superintendent (or their proxies) in November to discuss current issues facing the school district. In December, the SBNC holds a public meeting where the history and procedures of the SBNC are explained, and residents are given an opportunity to express their views on board member qualifications and district issues. This is followed by a public Nominating Meeting (around February 1) where the community is invited to submit names of potential candidates or completed candidate applications. In mid-February, the SBNC publishes the names of all applicants and solicits comment letters from the general public. Applicant interviews are conducted in March and nominations are made in April in time for appropriate filings for a May election.

Scarsdale

Scarsdale uses three standing committees (all community-based) to administer, oversee and nominate candidates for open school board seats. This structure seeks to ensure continuity of leadership and minimize undue influence of any one individual or small group in the nominating process.

The main committee - the School Board Nominating Committee (SBNC) - consists of 30 members elected from the five elementary school districts in the village. Member terms are three years and staggered so that two new members from each district are elected annually. In addition to the 30 voting members, there are four non-voting members: the Chair and Vice Chair, who are elected by the SBNC members from the previous year; and two appointees from the community groups, the Forum and the Confederation of Scarsdale Neighborhood Association Presidents (SNAP).

The SNBC is responsible for nominating candidates each year to fill upcoming vacancies on the school board. Its practices and procedures are very similar to those used by the Bronxville NPC. The SBNC begins each year by meeting with the superintendent and board president to hear about outstanding issues facing the district and orient new committee members. Following this, the SBNC initiates a process (formal and informal) of soliciting names of potential board candidates. Those choosing to be interviewed submit biographical information, including civic activities and other qualifications. Candidates are then interviewed by the SBNC and nominees are eventually chosen through an interview process similar to that used by the NPC. The by-laws of the SBNC state that interview questions are limited only to a candidate's experience and qualifications.

Prior to the conclusion of its work, the SBNC also reviews its procedures regarding the nomination of candidates to the school board and makes recommendations to the Joint Committee for changes to the by-laws.

A second committee, the Administrative Committee (AC), conducts the election of members to the SBNC, and is responsible for raising funds to cover all costs associated with the school board nominating process. The AC's election responsibilities include assembling SBNC candidates for election, and administering the SBNC election. At the beginning of each school year, the AC invites residents to submit candidates for the SNBC (anyone with ten signatures may run for a district seat). Once a slate has been assembled, the AC prepares and mails a brochure containing the biographies of SBNC candidates to every household in Scarsdale and posts the information on the SBNC website. The election is held on one day in mid-January at the Middle School.

AC membership consists of the 10 voting members of the SNBC whose terms just expired, three members appointed by the Confederation of Scarsdale Neighborhood Association President (SNAP), three members appointed by the Town and Village Civic Club (TVCC) and three at-large community members appointed by the AC Chair. The AC chair and vice chair are non-voting members.

Each year, following the selection of SNBC nominees for the school board, the Joint Committee (JC) meets to review the nominating process and consider any by-law changes. Any such changes must be submitted to a public vote. JC membership consists of members of the outgoing AC; members of the SBNC whose terms expire on the election of a new SBNC; and the incoming Chair and Vice Chair of the SBNC.

Recommendation:

In reviewing Edgemont's school board nominating process, the 2012 ARC determined that it may be appropriate to consider including a student representative on the NPC to participate in a prescribed and limited manner. (See Section 11 below.). The 2012 ARC does not believe that any other practices or procedures in Scarsdale and Edgemont are practicable or would enhance the effectiveness and operations of the NPC.

2. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA TO FOR INDIVIDUALS SEEKING NPC NOMINATION FOR TRUSTEE

A community member brought to the attention of the 2012 ARC that a current trustee did not meet New York State legal requirements to serve as a trustee. Specifically, this trustee did not meet the standard of being a "qualified voter" (as required under "New York State Education Law Article 43 Section 2101) because the trustee in question was a registered voter in a state other than New York . The trustee subsequently remedied his eligibility status by registering to vote as a resident of Bronxville approximately 2 years after his election as trustee.

It is important to note that the application all individuals seeking the NPC nomination for trustee must complete and sign states that the applicant:

“...understand (s) I must meet all New York State legal requirements for membership on the School Board. Article 43 Section 2102 states: A member of a School Board must be able to read and write, must be a qualified voter of the district, and have been a resident of the school district for at least one year prior to election.”

As a result of this situation, the ARC elected to review eligibility criteria for both individuals seeking the NPC nomination for trustee and for individuals seeking election to the NPC.

The Committee reviewed all of the qualifications in “Rules” Section IV – 14. The ARC discussed amending the “Rules” to include that individuals seeking the NPC nomination for trustee be required to be registered voters in Bronxville. It was unanimously agreed that the eligibility criteria should be expanded to include this requirement.

The ARC also examined if one year as a district resident was sufficient tenure in the Village prior to nomination. The Committee unanimously agreed that a School Board candidate’s length of residency in the Village should be a factor considered by the NPC in its selection process. “Rules” Section IV – 14a states in part that “The candidate must be knowledgeable about the needs of the Bronxville School and the community.”

Recommendations:

A. The ARC recommends that the “Rules” Section IV – 14(a) be amended as follows

CURRENT WORDING:

It is the policy of the Committee that a nominee for Trustee shall be an individual whose educational or professional background and/or volunteer experience will enhance the candidate’s effectiveness and who will make a substantial contribution to the deliberations of the Board. The candidate must be knowledgeable about the needs of the Bronxville School and community. Candidates must be aware of the heavy time requirements for service on the Board of Trustees, and prepared to make allowances in their vocational and personal commitments so that they will be able to attend all meetings and fulfill committee assignments.

PROPOSED AMMENDMENT:

It is the policy of the Committee that a nominee for Trustee shall be an individual whose educational or professional background and/or volunteer experience will enhance the candidate’s effectiveness and who will make a substantial contribution to the deliberations of the Board. The candidate must be knowledgeable about the needs of the Bronxville School and community and must be a registered voter in the Bronxville, N.Y. election district. Candidates must be aware of the heavy time requirements for service on the Board of Trustees, and prepared to make allowances in their vocational and personal commitments so that they will be able to attend all meetings and fulfill committee assignments.

B. The ARC recommends that the application to be completed by individuals seeking the NPC nomination as Trustee be amended as detailed in Appendix I.

3. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA TO SERVE ON NPC

The ARC reviewed the eligibility criteria for Bronxville residents seeking election to the NPC. The Committee’s discussions focused on whether the NPC members should be subject to the

same eligibility criteria as individuals seeking the NPC nomination for Trustee and, if not, in what ways should the criteria differ.

The ARC discussed the appropriateness of having employees and /or family members of employees of the BUFSD serving on the NPC. The Committee recognized that many BUFSD employees have children in the school and make significant contributions to the school and community as parents and residents. Members were concerned that these individuals' relationship with the BUFSD could potentially result in conflicts of interest in their service on the NPC. In order to avoid this possibility, the Committee unanimously agreed that faculty members/employees of the BUFSD and their family members should not be eligible to serve on the NPC.

Eligibility criteria to serve on the NPC currently require only that NPC members be residents of Bronxville for one year, with no requirement of being a "qualified voter" or a voter registered to vote in the Bronxville election district. This issue was discussed at length with 5 ARC members of the opinion that residency should be the sole criteria in this regard. Two ARC members dissented and felt that NPC members should be "qualified voters" and that residents not meeting this requirement should be ineligible to serve on the NPC (particularly given that the NPC nominees have typically been elected in the Trustee election). The Committee voted 5 – 2 for no change in this regard.

Recommendations:

A. The ARC recommends that faculty members/employees of the BUFSD and their family members should be ineligible to serve on the NPC, and the "Rules" Section I – 4 and Section IV – 8 be amended as follows:

CURRENT WORDING

Eligibility and criteria for service on the NPC

1 – 4

Chairman shall eliminate from consideration for membership on the Committee any candidate who is an elected official of the Village of Bronxville or an officer of a political party; or one currently seeking election to a Village office or to an office in a political party.

IV – 8

It shall be the policy of the Committee that any Committee member who, during his or her tenure on the Committee, chooses to run for political office or becomes an officer of a political party, shall immediately resign from the Committee.

PROPOSED AMENDMENT

Eligibility and criteria for service on the NPC

1 – 4

Chairman shall eliminate from consideration for membership on the Committee any candidate who is an elected official of the Village of Bronxville or an officer of a political party; or one currently seeking election to a Village office or to an office in a political party. The Chairman shall also eliminate from consideration for membership on

the Committee any candidate who is a faculty member, employee of the school district or a family member of a faculty member or employee of the school district.

IV – 8

It shall be the policy of the Committee that any Committee member who, during his or her tenure on the Committee, chooses to run for political office or becomes an officer of a political party, shall immediately resign from the Committee. Any Committee member who, during his or her tenure on the Committee, seeks or commences employment with the School District, or whose family member seeks or commences employment with the School District, shall immediately resign from the Committee.

B. The Committee also recommends that the current “Application to be Placed on the Ballot for Election as a Member of the Non-Partisan Committee” be amended as detailed in Appendix II to reflect this change.

4. ELECTION PROCEDURES FOR CANDIDATES SEEKING TO SERVE ON NPC

The 2012 ARC explored the possibility of electronic voting to increase voter turnout for the election of NPC members and decrease the labor and financial costs associated with paper ballots. In the last four NPC elections, the voter turnout in the seven electoral districts has ranged from a low of 5 percent (District 20 in 2011) to a high of 21 percent (District 16 in 2008). The average voter turnout in the 2011 election was 8 percent. Each year, approximately 5,000 ballots are mailed to nearly 2,700 households at a cost of roughly \$2,800 (2010).

We consulted two neighboring communities that have committees similar to the NPC: Edgemont (Geoff Loftus) and Scarsdale (Nan Berke).

Edgemont

Edgemont does not have elections for the School Board Nominating Committee (SBNC), its equivalent of the NPC. The SBNC is composed of 28 members and includes: two representatives from each constituent civic association (neighborhood-based), plus an alternative that participates in nominating if one of the representatives cannot participate; at-large representatives for those civic associations that are not adequately represented named by the Edgemont Community Council*; and a high school student representative. (*Note: The Edgemont Community Council (ECC) was founded in 1947 to determine community opinion on civic matters, coordinate community action thereon, and to plan and promote the general welfare of the Edgemont community. ECC is the sponsor of the non-partisan School Board Nominating Committee (SBNC), providing the impartial chairperson and underwriting the associated costs).

Scarsdale

Scarsdale has a School Board Nominating Committee (SBNC) that consists of 30 elected members. The community utilizes paper ballots and mail-in ballots that are available on-line for download and at various places in the community. This year, they had 528 votes cast, which was a record turnout. It took 8-9 people two hours to count the votes.

In 2009, the League of Women Voters of Scarsdale undertook a study of the feasibility of Internet voting to increase voter participation. Based on their research, they decided not to pursue e-voting for a number of reasons:

- 1) Concerns re. Internet and personal computer security.
- 2) Concerns re. the “digital divide” (e-voting studies revealed that more white, economically advantaged voters used Internet voting while non-white, older, rural and unemployed voters of the state utilized traditional balloting).

Because universities utilize e-voting to elect members of alumni boards and committees, we contacted Qualtrics, the company that provides e-voting services to Columbia University. Unfortunately, the entry-level package starts at \$5,000, nearly 40 percent more than current cost to administer the voting for NPC members.

After comparing methodologies and best practices with neighboring school districts that have a similar non-partisan process, the Committee unanimously concluded that the current method, while labor intensive, remains the most cost effective and secure option available to our community at this time

Recommendation:

No changes to the election procedures for NPC members are recommended.

5. VOTING PROCEDURES FOR NPC SELECTION OF CANDIDATES SEEKING NPC NOMINATION FOR TRUSTEES OF THE BUFSD

The codification and transparency of the NPC has been an important factor in its longevity and the high regard in which it is held by the community. Most of the NPC's activities and procedures are clearly outlined in the “Plan” and/or the “Rules”. Voting procedures for the selection of the NPC's nominee for Trustee are a notable exception. The only requirements contained in the NPC's organic documents are that (“Rules” III – 10) members must become acquainted with all candidates in order to vote and (“Rules” III – 11) that to be selected as the NPC nominee for Trustee a candidate must receive at least 14 affirmative votes. No guidance is provided as to the voting system utilized by the NPC, and, as such, each NPC has chosen the voting system it would employ.

The 2008 ARC reviewed the voting methods employed by the 2002 - 2008 NPCs. Typically, each NPC member cast his/her votes for all School Board vacancies on a single secret, hand-written ballot. Major issues of disagreement stemmed from the occasional desire to vote for one open seat at a time in an effort to control gender or incumbent balance on the Board. The 2008 ARC concluded that “in all years, even years with a large number of candidates, the ultimate outcome of the voting accurately reflected the views of the NPC.”

A sub-committee of the 2010 NPC was established to research voting systems and recommend a system which would function fairly and efficiently particularly in contested elections. The sub-committee recommended an iterative voting system which was an amalgam of “first past-the-post”, “sequential” and “elimination run-off” voting systems (see APPENDIX III). These voting procedures were approved and utilized by the 2010, 2011 and 2012 NPCs.

The 2010 and 2012 NPC's were faced with complex voting situations where the number of candidates exceeded the number of seats up for election by four, highlighting the importance of having an established and well considered voting system in place. In 2012 in particular, the voting required multiple rounds, including run-off's. NPC members felt having a well-defined procedure in place was extremely helpful. This "test by fire" of the voting system described below reinforces the ARC's confidence in this system, which was unanimously endorsed by the ARC for consideration by the NPC.

The ARC discussed several voting options and explored two in detail. The ARC explored ranked ballot voting where each voter places all candidates on the ballot in order of preference, with the voting weighted such that candidates ranked higher would receive more weight than those ranked lower. The candidate with the highest weighed total number of votes would win the election. For example in a four candidate election, the first choice would receive 4 votes, second choice 3 votes, etc. The ARC determined that this system would not necessarily meet the requirement that to be elected as the NPC nominee for Trustee a candidate must receive at least 14 affirmative votes. The ARC also determined that ranked ballot voting was better suited for large scale voting with multiple (greater than 5) winners to be determined from the large pool of candidates and, therefore, not properly suited for the selection of nominees for Trustee.

Recommendations:

A. The ARC recommends that the NPC adopt the voting system as detailed in APPENDIX III and amend the "Rules" section III-11 as follows:

CURRENT WORDING

Voting for Committee nominee shall be by ballot. To be designated a Committee nominee for a Board vacancy, a candidate must receive at least fourteen (14) affirmative votes. A motion to make the designation unanimous can be defeated by one negative vote.

PROPOSED AMENDMENT

Voting for Committee nominee shall be by ballot and be performed according to the procedure detailed in APPENDIX I. To be designated a Committee nominee for a Board vacancy, a candidate must receive at least fourteen (14) affirmative votes. A motion to make the designation unanimous can be defeated by one negative vote.

B. The ARC recommends that the NPC amend the "Rules" to include APPENDIX III as APPENDIX I of the "Rules"

6. NPC CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

As provided for in the Rules of Procedure of the Non-Partisan Committee ("The Rules") IV (4):

"Committee interviews and elections shall be kept confidential by the members."

NPC members are required each year to deliver an executed copy a Confidentiality Agreement to the NPC Chair. Members will not be permitted to participate in Committee meetings until such time as this requirement has been satisfied.”

B. The ARC recommends that in order to ensure the consistency and use of the confidentiality agreement that the NPC Chair’s Manual include a copy of the “Agreement Regarding Confidentiality & Scope of NPC Interviews/Discussions” as set forth in Appendix V.

7. ARC CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

It is important that the ARC be able to discuss NPC procedures fully and openly in order to most effectively evaluate the workings of the NPC. Occasionally, it is necessary that certain confidential elements of the NPC’s operations are discussed by ARC members. In order to ensure that these discussions remain confidential, the ARC has unanimously agreed that all ARC members should sign a Confidentiality Agreement. This agreement was executed by all members of the 2012 ARC.

Recommendation:

The ARC recommends that a Confidentiality Agreement as set forth in Appendix VI be included in the ARC Chairman’s Manual for use by future ARCs.

8. KEEPING NPC MEMBERS’ DISCUSSIONS DURING COMMITTEE MEETINGS WITHIN THE SCOPE OF NPC MANDATE

During the course of NPC meetings, Committee members occasionally stray beyond the above stated focus and expand discussions to include policy-related issues. This is particularly evident during the NPC’s interviews of BUFSD trustees. (At the beginning of the nomination process the NPC conducts trustee interviews to ascertain their views as to the critical issues which the school and Board of Trustees are likely to face in the future and to solicit trustee opinions as to qualifications that the NPC may wish to consider when evaluating applicants for the NPC nomination.) Despite gentle management from Chairs to limit the interview’s scope to issues relating to the selection of nominees, Committee members often inappropriately expand the conversation to explore differences of opinion concerning policy issues. The ARC has learned from trustees that they have a strong preference that these interviews should not include such discussions.

The objectives of the NPC are to, on a non-partisan basis:

- solicit qualified individuals to seek election to the NPC and hold elections to this end;
- elect NPC officers; and,
- solicit, nominate and support Trustee candidates for election to the BUFSD.

The ARC believes that all Committee meetings should be focused exclusively on achieving these objectives. Discussion of BUFSD policy or of a member’s individual issues is not appropriate and should be strongly discouraged by the Chair. Members should refrain from the discussion of

policy issues or individual issues with the school during Committee meetings and it is not appropriate for members to discuss these issues during committee interviews of the school administrators or current trustees. The only exception to this rule is that members may inquire as to applicants' policy positions as part of applicant interviews. Any such inquires of applicants shall be posed in an objective manner which does not reveal the member's position on the policy in question and should not be the basis for discussion.

The ARC unanimously agreed that the "Rules" IV – 10 and the NPC Confidentiality Agreement should be expanded to reinforce to members the importance of confining the scope of NPC discussions to the execution of the NPC mandate.

Recommendations:

A. The ARC recommends that Section IV (10) of the Rules be amended as follows:

CURRENT WORDING:

It is the responsibility of Committee members to inform themselves of the qualifications of candidates for Committee officer, Committee member and Trustee. Each Committee member may make inquiries of other Committee members and/or non-Committee members to inform himself/herself of such qualifications of candidates. Committee members are urged to express their opinions freely in Committee meetings, including any doubts and reservations, in regard to the qualifications of candidates under consideration for Committee and/or Board membership; their comments should be objective, factual, and avoid hearsay. It is the duty of the Chairman to focus the discussion, to the extent possible, upon the qualifications of the candidates and the needs of the school.

PROPOSED AMENDMENT:

It is the responsibility of Committee members to inform themselves of the qualifications of candidates for Committee officer, Committee member and Trustee. Each Committee member may make inquiries of other Committee members and/or non-Committee members to inform himself/herself of such qualifications of candidates. Committee members are urged to express their opinions freely in Committee meetings, including any doubts and reservations, in regard to the qualifications of candidates under consideration for Committee and/or Board membership; their comments should be objective, factual, and avoid hearsay. It is the duty of the Chairman to focus the discussion, to the extent possible, upon the qualifications of the candidates and the needs of the school. Committee members should avoid discussion of policy or member's individual issues during Committee interviews/meetings, particularly Committee interviews with current Trustees or members of the BUFSD Administration. The only exception to this rule is that members may inquire as to the policy positions of applicants seeking the NPC nomination as candidate for Trustee. Any such policy related inquires of applicants shall be in posed in an objective manner that does not reveal the member's position on the policy in question and should not be the basis for discussion.

B. The ARC recommends that the current Confidentiality Agreement (Appendix IV) be replaced by the proposed "Agreement Regarding Confidentiality & Scope of NPC Interviews/Discussions" as set forth in Appendix V.

9. NPC PUBLIC RELATIONS EFFORTS AND STRATEGIES TO INCREASE COMMUNITY AWARENESS AND INVOLVEMENT

The 1993 ARC expanded the Role of the NPC Vice-Chairman to include responsibility for NPC public relations. Effective public relations and communications efforts by the NPC have been a central element in the NPC's longevity and the high regard in which it is held by the community. The more effectively that the NPC can communicate to the community the role and procedures of the NPC, its impact on the community and the diligence with which NPC members execute their responsibilities, the greater the likelihood that the NPC can continue to recruit top-caliber members and highly qualified candidates seeking the NPC nomination for Trustee. Effective public relations and communications can also significantly enhance badly needed financial support of the NPC.

The 1993 ARC recommended that the NPC endeavor to identify at least two candidates seeking election as a member of the NPC be placed on the ballot from each of the seven election districts. This recommendation was echoed by the 1998 ARC. While NPC Chairs soliciting residents to seek election to the NPC understand that potential candidates are reluctant to enter into a "contested" election for membership on the NPC in our very closely-knit community; the 2012 ARC unanimously believes that contested elections for NPC membership are desirable. Contested elections serve to reinforce the legitimacy and transparency of the NPC process. Experience has shown that contested elections also result in higher voter participation and contributions to the NPC.

Recommendations:

A. The ARC recommends that NPC Chairs strive to identify at least two candidates from each of the Village's seven election districts to seek election to the NPC.

B. The ARC recommends that the NPC appoint a Public Relations and Communications sub-committee of the NPC to be chaired by the NPC Vice-Chair. This sub-committee would explore options to enhance the community's understanding of the NPC and encourage increased community participation in the NPC process. The 2012 ARC further recommends that this sub-committee include both members of the NPC as well as members of the community who have public relations expertise.

10. STUDENT OBSERVER TO NPC

The ARC discussed the issue of student representation on the NPC, specifically during the initial meetings that feature presentations by current members of the school board and the school superintendent focusing on the school district's needs and challenges. The ARC believes that it is important to hear from the student body, and a student representative would provide a valuable perspective to the NPC. A neighboring district, Edgemont, has a student representative on its School Board Nominating Committee. For reasons of confidentiality, however, the ARC feels the student should not participate in candidate interviews or deliberations.

Recommendations:

A. The ARC believes that a student perspective would be of considerable value

and recommends that the NPC Chair work with the HS Principal to establish a process for selecting a student representative. The student representative may be the vice president of the Student Faculty Legislature or another HS student as agreed upon by the NPC Chair and the HS Principal. The student representative program will be a pilot program and it is recommended that the next ARC review this program.

B, The ARC recommends that the student representative serve as an ex-officio member of the NPC. The student representatives' role is purely as an observer at NPC organizational meetings, interviews with Trustees/administrators and open meetings. The student representative would not participate in candidate interviews or other meetings during which confidential or sensitive information may be discussed. The student representative would be subject to the confidentiality requirements of the Committee and would be required to execute a confidentiality agreement.

C. No change to NPC Plan or Rules are recommended. Changes to the NPC Chair materials to reflect the addition of a student representative are recommended

11. CHANGE OF NPC CALENDAR TO COINCIDE WITH BUFSD ACADEMIC YEAR CALENDAR

The NPC currently follows a calendar-year schedule. On Jan. 1 of each year, new NPC members begin their terms and the newly-elected slate of NPC officers take office. The NPC's work, especially from the officers' point of view, gets into high gear in the very first days of January, with the bulk of the NPC's work accomplished during the ensuing three to four months leading up to the annual school board election in May. Thus, the most important months of the NPC's calendar fall when one-third of the NPC is totally new to the Committee and the officers are novices in their new roles. Additionally, some tasks of the incoming officers require lead time and may be more effectively executed in late autumn or early winter.

From May to August there is little, if any, NPC activity. In the autumn, the NPC focuses on recruiting NPC candidates and conducting the elections for the new class of NPC members and officers. Experience suggests that a significant number of NPC members do not "re-engage" for the autumn portion of the NPC's work. This can create additional burdens on those members who do participate in the autumn and may compromise the NPC's efforts to attract a sufficient number of quality candidates to run for NPC.

Also, the autumn may not be the optimal time to generate interest in the NPC, as the community is not as focused on school issues as it may be in the spring. Further, the election of new NPC members falls in late November and early December, when the community may be more attentive to holiday preparations.

The ARC considered whether putting the NPC on a July-to-June year might address the issues discussed above. Under such a schedule, the election of new NPC members would be held in late spring/early summer, and new NPC officers would be elected prior to the NPC's adjourning for the summer. Assuming office on July 1 would afford NPC officers sufficient lead time to fully plan the core months of activity (January-April) and secure the necessary facilities and

appointments without conflict. This change in NPC calendar, with the election of new NPC members in late spring when the community is already focused on school matters (budget, Trustee election, etc.), may serve to increase community awareness of, and donations to, the NPC.

Recommendations:

A. The ARC recommends that the NPC change from a calendar year to a school year cycle. This change would require the following amendments to the “Plan”:

- §2: Replace the word “January” with the word “July”
- §3: First paragraph: Replace the word “November” with the word “May”
First paragraph: Replace the word “December” with the word “June”
Second paragraph: Replace the word “September” with the word “March”
Fourth paragraph: Replace the word “November” with the word “May”

B. This change would require the following amendments to the “Rule”:

- §I-1: Replace the word “Fall” with the word “Spring”
- §I-2: Replace the words “Fall nominating committee” with the words “meeting at which the Committee will consider candidates for Committee member”
- §I-2a: Delete
- §I-3: Replace the words “first meeting” with the words “first meeting at which the Committee will consider candidates for Committee member”
- §II-1: Replace the word “Fall” with the word “Spring”
- §II-2: Replace the word “December” with the word “June” in both instances
- §II-3: Replace the word “December” with the word “June”
- §III-2: Replace the words “Prior to the first meeting” with the words “In September”
- §II-3: Replace the words “the first meeting” with the word “January”
- §II-4: Replace the words “At its first meeting” with the words “Prior to interviewing and evaluating Trustee nominee candidates”

C. The ARC recommends that the NPC adopt a transition year calendar for the 2011 -2012 and 2012-2013 NPC as set forth in Appendix VII. The impact of this change on NPC members and officers is reflected in Appendix VIII.

D. The ARC recommends that the NPC adopt a school-year related calendar for 2013- 2014 and future NPCs as set forth in Appendix IX.

12. TECHNICAL AMENDMENTS TO NPC RULES OF PROCEDURE AND PLAN TO ADDRESS EXISTING INCONSISTENCIES

The ARC undertook a comprehensive review of the “Plan” and the “Rules” to ensure that these documents are consistent with and accurately codify NPC practices and procedures.

Recommendations:

The ARC unanimously recommends the following changes to the “Plan” and “Rules”. Some of the recommended amendments render the language consistent with current practice (e.g., references to the NPC page on the BUFSD website now need to direct the reader to the NPC’s own website), some clarify existing language, and some codify existing practice.

Amend Rule I-2 to strike the words “...on the NPC page on the Bronxville School District website:” and insert in their stead the words “...on the NPC website:”

Amend Rule I to add a new §I-9 stating: “In counting ballots cast in the election for new NPC members, an existing NPC member shall not be involved in opening or counting ballots cast by voters from the Election District represented by such NPC member.”

Amend Rule II-3 to replace the words “a Secretary, and a Treasurer” with the words “a Secretary/Treasurer.”

Amend Rule III to include a new section stating: “All due diligence information relating to a Trustee nominee candidate – including the results of reference checking and the contents of feedback from the community – shall be shared with the full NPC not later than five (5) days prior to the NPC meeting at which the NPC is slated to vote to select its Trustee nominees. Any information that the NPC’s officers and/or members receive after that deadline shall be discarded and not shared with any member of the NPC.”

Amend Rule IV-6 to state: “Committee ballots for nominees shall be counted by at least two of the three officers of the NPC: Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary/Treasurer.”

Amend Rule IV-7(b) to expand the definition of “partial term” as follows: “... a partial term of less than one-half of one full term.”

Amend Plan §3, second paragraph to replace the words “School District” and insert in their stead the term “NPC.”

CONCLUSION

The 2012 ARC has undertaken a comprehensive review of the “Rules”, the “Plan” and the procedures of the NPC. The Committee believes that the NPC effectively discharges its responsibilities and that the recommendations offered herein will serve to enhance the operations of the NPC.

This report is respectfully submitted to the NPC for its review and consideration.

Bob Galbraith, Chair
Bruce Jackson
Mary Marvin
Irena Choi Stern

Michael Pytosh, Vice Chair
John Knox
Rick Rugani

September 1, 2012

Appendices

- I. Proposed "Application for Individuals Seeking the NPC Nomination for Trustee of the Bronxville Union Free School District"
- II. Proposed "Application to be Placed on the Ballot for Election as a Member of the Non-Partisan Committee"
- III. Description of Proposed Voting System
- IV. "Confidentiality Agreement" Currently Used by NPC
- V. Proposed "Agreement Regarding Confidentiality & Scope of NPC Interviews/Discussions"
- VI. Proposed "ARC Confidentiality Agreement"
- VII. Proposed 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 Transition Calendars to Facilitate Adoption of School Year Calendar.
- VIII. Proposed NPC Calendar 2013-2014 and Beyond
- IX. Impact of Proposed Changes in NPC Calendar on NPC Officers and Members
- X. Proposed "Plan for the Non-Partisan Nomination and Election of School Trustees"
- XI. Proposed "Rules of Procedure of the Non-Partisan Committee"