

LTUSD board wants to have louder voice

By Kathryn Reed

Communication. It was a dominate part of Lake Tahoe Unified School District's board of education's discussion this week.

There are some board members who want to get their message out to parents and the broader community in a more proactive way.

Communication from the district, though, has usually been through the superintendent's secretary who acts as the public information officer. An email is sent out to a large group (anyone may receive the email) that talks a bit about the upcoming meeting, school happenings, larger education topics and community events.

It is nowhere near the professional correspondence that Tahoe Truckee Unified sends out, nor as comprehensive in terms of being district specific.

LTUSD's presence on social media is almost non-existent. The last Facebook post was on Feb. 14, and that was from a member of the public at a board meeting. LTUSD is random with its 241 tweets; and only has 179 followers on Twitter.

It has been the board's policy to have the president speak for the five even though they are all elected officials with the same weight on the board. *Lake Tahoe News* finds this to be problematic when the president doesn't return phone calls, even for a benign story like a feature on the new high school principal.

At the May 23 meeting it was agreed that other board members could start writing guest columns. There was talk of having them be vetted by the district office. It remains to be seen

if this is for fact checking, substance, tone or some other reason.

This is the first board in more than a decade that has members who openly don't want to be subservient to the district office and understand they are the boss of the superintendent, not the other way around.

The conversation Tuesday revolved around some members wanting to have a voice in the accreditation process, and to at least make it easier for the public to get information.

It was noted the information on South Tahoe High School's website is not easy to find and what is there is not written in a manner that is simple to understand. Staff agreed to place it more prominently and have it written with less jargon.

STHS is in the middle of a two-year probation from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. This was the first time the school had not receive a six-year accreditation. Staff and administrators this last year have been making changes in hopes of securing that longer accreditation when evaluated next school year.

While the electeds can help disseminate information, their actual involvement in the WASC process is limited. They can monitor time lines and be aware of the scope of work, as well as set any policies that would help the school achieve its goals, but too much active involvement is a red flag to WASC officials.

Even so, the electeds agreed that they want their voices to be louder going forward – no matter the topic.