

Birchwood PTO Meeting
Wednesday, October 7, 2015, 9:00 am
Birchwood Cafeteria

MINUTES OF MEETING

Members Present: Anne Burger (Recording secretary and parent); Jan Brown (Co president and parent); JoMarie Ethier (Co President and parent); Jill Appert (Vice president of fundraising and parent); Suzanne Brooksby (VP Programs and Services and parent); Debra Berndt (Principal); Katherine Kirkpatrick (Media Specialist); Laura Mirkovic (parent); Katie Cowley-Cooper (parent).

1. **Call to Order:**

Jan Brown called the meeting to order at 9:00AM.

2. **Co-President's Report (JoMarie Ethier, Jan Brown):**

Jan: At a council meeting last week, they talked about how all the pto's are doing the directory differently. The contract for edirectory is up at the end of the year. How will we proceed for next year? Do all schools have principal accounts and/or mini grants? The dues to council are increasing next year. It will be an increase of \$100. However, it had gone down by \$100 so now going back to original amount. Audit is coming to an end. Jan cleaned out the filing cabinets in office. There should be a binder for meeting minutes in there.

JoMarie: We did not approve June minutes at last PTO meeting. June and September minutes passed out. Laura motioned to approve both sets of minutes. Jill seconded. Approved. Jason Chen visiting author on May 3. Kate K. said they hope to get Kate Messner next year. She is about \$3000.

3. **Officer Reports**

a. **VP Programs and Services (Suzanne Brooksby):** Teacher appreciation breakfast is coming up on 10/19. Tiffanie Wood does not have much help as of yet. She will come in on the Sunday before to set up. Suzanne talked to Tara McKenna about Monster Mash. She has confirmations for Magician, balloon person and pumpkins. Coming up is the book fair, Joni B and Fran H are doing it. Someone signed up for Fall fundraisers as well. There is still an opening for Liaison to the Board of Ed and NCAP. Fun fair, ice cream social and talent show are pretty good with volunteers.

b. **VP Fundraisers (Jill Appert):** Fall fundraiser (pies and frozen foods) should be coming home tomorrow in back packs. Columbus Day Pizzeria Uno fundraiser also. Lynn Boler has some coupons that people need to bring with them to get the donation at Pizzeria Uno. She is making copies today and sending home in back packs. Lynn said she emailed the link to Pam Ober for the a flyer. None of the local Panera's do a fundraiser like other Panera's. Someone wondered if Sonic does fundraisers.

c. **Treasurer (Brenda Leto):** Brenda could not come. The fall mum fundraiser made about \$600. Agreed to do the fall mum fundraiser again next year at the back to school BBQ. Flyers were put in teacher's mailboxes but may have gotten overlooked with the beginning of school. JoMarie said that the PTO is developing a new form for all event coordinators to tally how much was raised, spent, etc. Staff refrigerator is almost dead. PTO would like to purchase a new fridge for staff lounge. Try Sears outlet because there may be good ones there but with dings. JoMarie would like a budget for a larger fridge. \$600 budget. Laura motioned and Jill seconded. Motion passed.

d. **Secretary (Anne Burger):** all past documents, minutes, financials have been scanned onto the Google Drive.

4. **Principal's Report (Deb Berndt):** PLC (Professional learning community) started. Now Revisiting PLC. Reading this at faculty meetings. There are mission statements, vision statements drafted. More will be coming for parents, parent nights. Mission and vision statements will drive everything we do as a school community. There are 4 pillars for the foundation.

Mission: Why we are here

Vission: What do we hope to become

Values/collective commitments: promise we are making or action we agreed to take. PROMISE

ACTION

Goals: Based on previous pillars. How do we mark this?? Would like a parent night to facilitate small group discussions to add to it. Laura M has a book "Starting with why?" that's the centerpiece and everything grows from there. There is a deck of cards and reduce them to 5 value cards. Value based decisions. Laura will get the book to Deb and perhaps Sasa can help facilitate something. There is a lot of trash around the new playground. Need to look into a couple of garbage cans.

5. Teachers' Liaison Report (Amy Santandrea, Kathleen Vermilyea): Teachers not present. Kate K reiterated how grateful all the teachers are for the support. No official report. THANKS!

6. Committee Reports (See Attachment):

7. Board of Education Report (See Attachment) (Kevin Laurilliard)

8. PTO to Board of Ed Liaison's Report (Anne Burger)

9. Old Business

a. Monster Mash

b. Fall Fundraising

10. New Business

a. Red Ribbon Week: Week of October 19. Counselors started this last year. Officially anti drug campaign but at elementary school it's about making good choices, exercise, nutrition, NCAP is donating about 200 tulip bulbs to each school. Could the planting be done at recess? PTO volunteers to help plant them outside the school. Do each class separately at recess to minimize chaos. Tina F and Lori L have helped with the garden before, perhaps can help. Suzanne will reach out to the parents for volunteers.

b. Future of eDirectory: Table the discussion of edirectory for now. This school has 85% opt in. If it's not available next year, then need to decide what we want to do then.

c. School Enhancements: New staff refrigerator in staff lounge. Trash cans by new playgrounds. Picnic tables for playground. This time of year, Lowes always has sales. Discussed zip line and children getting into arguments about who goes next and how long of a ride. Mrs. Berndt will talk to recess aids so that the children stand on one platform and get one trip down and back if there's a line. Someone will look into the weight limit on the zip cruise since on the weekends, middle school kids come over and will ride 2 at a time.

d. Discussed briefly spring fundraiser of My School Color run.

5. Adjournment: Laura motioned to adjourn. Jill seconded. Meeting adjourned at 10:20AM.

Submitted by Anne Burger

Next Meeting November 4, 2015 6:00pm

Attachment

1. Committee Reports

a. Yearbook. The Yearbook Committee has unanimously agreed on a cover for this year's Yearbook and it has been submitted to Lifetouch. The online pages are setup and page designers should have received an email for their login registration with Lifetouch to be able to upload and design their photos and pages.

The committee is still missing a designer for Mr. Parisi's class. The committee is also still looking for 5th grade page designers for the specialty section of Latin America and the States Fair. Sonya Ward will reach out this week to Homeroom parents as well as class room parents of those classes to see if a photographer/page designer can be found. There is a record for the 1st day of school photos with over 100+ photos submitted *in printable format*.

b. 1000 Book Club. The Committee met and went through all the bags that are in the building.. More than half of the bags have yet to be returned. With the 1000 Book Kick-off event approaching, the Committee has sent out a request to all participants that if they have been holding bags for more than two weeks, to please return them as soon as possible.

c. Arts in Ed committee. The Committee has scheduled the following events:

- Nov 23 @ 1pm - Kids in Cultures program of folktales from around the world
- May 18 @ 1pm - Flame the Band - A band made of youths with mental or physical challenges
- June 9 @ 9:30 - Birds of Prey for the 4th graders in classroom

The following event is pending final confirmation and will be held at the end of Feb: Opera Saratoga-Operation Superpower. This program will focus on showing kids how to find their own superpower

d. Visiting Author. Laura Mirkovic and Soyoung Mok met with Kate Kirkpatrick about the visiting author program. They are waiting to hear about a date confirmation for this spring event. Kate met with the other librarians in the district and is working to have the author visit 3+ schools as a cost savings. Laura and Soyoung will provide Kate with the support she needs to make this event a success. Soyoung plans to be on site the day the author visits.

e. Junior Achievement. Laura Mirkovic is collecting parent contact information from teachers and currently has 5 responses. Laura will reach out to the remaining teachers this week to collect remaining information and coordinate with Junior Achievement.

f. Media. The following news releases were issued:

- news release was done on the playground ribbon cutting. Pictures and story were in Gazette as well as the district web site.
- news release and pictures is in process regarding gardening project and recent donation to Regional Food Bank.

g. Nature Park Update: The Nature Park Committee is working on the following projects:

- No changes have been made with the shed project.
- The Nature Trail Story Walk is up.
- The last of the carrots have been harvested and donated to the regional food bank.
- A plan is in progress to cover the strawberries for the winter with the current first graders.
- The Fall programs have been developed and permission slips have been distributed (K-2 art project on October 21 and 3-5 mapping the trail on October 28th).
- The committee is collaborating and offering assistance to kindergarten teachers with their ideas for planting a "rainbow garden."

2. Board of Education Report- **Board of Education Meeting Summary - September 24, 2015**

The Board of Education held a special meeting on Thursday, September 24, to take action on three items:

a. **Middle school childcare** - The Board approved TSL Adventures to provide before and afterschool childcare at Iroquois and Van Antwerp middle schools for families who choose to participate. The program is expected to begin in January. A survey conducted last year showed that parents were interested in the availability of the service. A committee reviewed the three proposals that were submitted using criteria that incorporated parent survey feedback, including cost and programming. TSL will lease the space from the district to run the program. Middle school families should look for more information from TSL in the weeks ahead.

b. **Energy efficient lighting** - The Board awarded a bid to ERSI Energy Smart Lighting, Inc. to replace 452 halide and fluorescent fixtures at the 1301 Hillside Avenue transportation facility with 383 LED lighting fixtures. A National Grid energy efficiency program will provide \$120,000 of the cost of the project. The net cost to the district will be \$65,000. This will result in annual energy cost savings.

c. **Niskayuna Rowing trip** - The Board approved a Niskayuna Rowing trip to the Head of the Riverfront Regatta in Hartford, Connecticut on October 4, with the costs to be covered by program fees. Best of luck to our students!

2. BOE Meeting Tuesday 9/15/15: 6PM

David Apkarian absent.

Comments from Board:

Kevin Laurillard: A High school Math teacher is a NYS semifinalist.

Deb Gordon: 9 High school students are semi finalists for Merit scholarships. Deb attended the Craig school ice cream social.

Howard S.: Attended Rosendale and Iroquois Back to school nights. Also discussed there have been some applicants for the Enrichment fund. Class of 1965 had their 50th reunion recently and had a tour of the high school.

Rosemarie P-J: Discussed the fabulous High school grab and go cart. Attended many soccer games and booster club meetings.

David Koes: Attended cross country events. Ice Cream social and Community Forum.

Pat Lanotte: Niskayuna High school and Van Antwerp declared Reward Schools and given plaques. Pat also met with the new school commissioner.

Student Comments:

Noah stated that Thursday is the first meeting of the student club to discuss student issues.

Superintendent comments:

Superintendent would like to become a member of the Chamber of Commerce. It is \$1600 per year and can form different partnerships. JCC Gala is on 11/14 and the school presents an award at Proctors since we were the recipient last year. Continue with the community forums, but just during day time now as the evenings were not well

attended. In the evenings, Superintendent will be attending various PTO meetings, Booster club meetings and other organizations. There is a Capital Region School board event at Shaker High on 9/29. There is a board meeting that night. Discussed holding the meeting on Thursday 9/26 or waiting until 10/1.

Assistant Superintendent comments:

Enrollment numbers: Elementary school—up by 39
Middle School—down by 19
High school—up by 30

Summer school-some didn't attend because transportation not provided. We need to consider this next year.

Additional:

Eva Jones: Freshman orientation went very well. 9th graders got to see how the high school looked and walk around before the upperclassman came the next day. High School code of conduct was reviewed with all the high school students.

Bill Garrison : Transportation had a rough start this year. Water main breaks, roads closed, etc. The department is essentially a brand new one this year and working out the issues. Will look into having more people to man the phones in the early part of school next year since many calls went to voice mail. Routes were redone due to not being efficient.

Appointed Scott Walroth Interim Music Director. There is a teacher leader (Eric Hughes) to help with the transition. Applications will be starting soon. Hope to have a music director in place by January. There had been someone the school was interested in but did not work out.

Rosendale Also is looking for a principal. Interim principal who is a former principal. Hopefully will have a new principal by January as well.

Parents will be getting a hard copy of the state tests from last year. State reports will soon be inputted into the Parent Portal for grades 4-9 for the tests from grades 3-8 from last year. State reports will be under Portfolio. Parents will be given the access information. IF parents don't have internet, hard copies will be sent out.

Old Business:

Approved the Principles of Operation

Discussion of Middle school before and after care: Certain criteria were put into place. A committee was appointed and discussed the criteria. Affordability-50%, Programming-40%, Quality of Proposal-10% were the weighting criteria. 3 proposals were submitted. Superintendent would like to have the next BOE meeting be on 9/24 to discuss the proposals and a recommendation on the rating so the before/after care can start soon, hopefully by January 1.

New Business: NYSSBA

Superintendent evaluations

Policies are being reviewed/revised. Presently working on Sports and Athletic Program and Child

Abuse and Mistreatment—First Reads.

Adjourned around 8PM.