

Birchwood PTO Meeting  
Wednesday, November 4, 2015  
Birchwood Conference room

**MINUTES OF MEETING**

**Members Present:** Anne Burger (Recording secretary and parent); Jan Brown (Co president and parent); JoMarie Ethier (Co President and parent); Suzanne Brooksby (VP Programs and Services and parent); Debra Berndt (Principal); Brenda Leto (Treasurer and parent); Brian Meservey (parent); Katheen Vermilyea (teacher and liaison); Amy Santandrea (teacher and liaison); Cosimo Tangorra (Superintendent); Tim Cook (former student); Nancy Cook (former parent); Mike Cooper (parent).

1. **Call to Order:**

Jan Brown called the meeting to order at 6:30PM

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

Minutes from 10/7/15 approved.

Jan and JoMarie still shopping for refrigerator. Directory is in the works. Suzanne said she can bring to the high school if needed. Will talk to Shilpa. Pin numbers are needed for electronic copy of directory. The PTO approved one mini grant and looking to approve another mini grant. Teachers should ask first for the mini grant then purchase instead of other way around. The school is looking into outside trash cans. District had some ideas but they were very expensive. Al said that he was fine with changing the bags. Staff appreciation breakfast came out with extra money and would like to put that money towards the amount for the refrigerator to bring the total to \$677..

3. **Officer Reports**

a. **VP Programs and Services (Suzanne Brooksby):** Suzanne has been very busy. Great success with nature park K-2 and 3-5 used compasses and mapping. Leafman is going on the bulletin board. Staff appreciation breakfast went well. 1000 book kick off. During Ribbon Week 100's bulbs were planted. Monster Mash was a success. November 30 starts book fair for that week. The theme is monsters. Joni is playing with that using the bulletin board. Sign up is next week. End of that week is open house, holiday craft shop and book fair.

b. **VP Fundraisers (Jill Appert):** Fall fundraiser was sent out. Spirit wear sale is ready for the check. Harry promised the pies by Thanksgiving. There was an overlapping fundraiser. Gift cards are now and olive oil is due Mid November.

c. **Treasurer (Brenda Leto):** Brenda stated that September balance was about \$11000, a lot of deposits, monster mash, et c. Ending bank balance is about \$16,000. Brian motioned for approval of bank ledger and Suzanne seconded.

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

4. **Principal's Report (Deb Berndt):** Thanked PTO for the bike ride in September, Suzanne and friends for tulip planting. There is a half day on 11/10, 11/17, & 11/25. No school on Veterans Day and 11/26 & 11/27 for Thanksgiving break. Mrs. Someone is taking a position at the high school. Interviews are next week. It is a civil service position and working with Mark Treanor to hire someone. In the mean time, Mrs. Horrigan is filling in. She filled in previously and Mrs. Tuttle will also help out.

5. **Teachers' Liaison Report (Amy Santandrea, Kathleen Vermilyea):** Mrs. Vermilyea: thank you for the wonderful breakfast. Kindergarteners are learning all about pumpkins now, counting seeds, floating, etc. First graders are working on their small moments stories. Second graders are working on finishing up their interaction unit. Learning about batteries, light bulbs and wires. Second grade class did a read aloud in the nature park. Mrs. Santandrea: Thank you for the breakfast as well. 3<sup>rd</sup> grade: geography, finishing up small moments stories. Personal narratives and learning about revisions, cutting and taping. 4<sup>th</sup> grade: Amy I. bought newly released books with mini grant. Doing Native American non fiction writing and close reading through songs. It was stated that there are scholastic dollars on scholastic web site that can be used as well for purchases.

6. Superintendent of Schools (Dr. Tangorra): Started his listening tour. He will be attended one PTO and booster club meeting at beginning of year. Will attend one or two per year for each of the schools. Contact him if need anything.

7. Committee Reports (See Attachment):.

8. Board of Education Report (David Apkarian in place of Kevin Laurilliard): there are students involved with the BOE now. They chose 2 seniors and 1 junior. Getting everything in place. They are non voting. They bring issues from the students to the board. They are going to talk to high school students as well as middle school students. Noah has a lot of input. BOE is in middle of strategic planning for the district. It will be an actionable plan. David A is working on partnerships within the district, corporate or personal partnerships. Trades or military after school and opportunities. Need to focus on the middle 80% of the kids instead of just the top 10% and bottom 10%. There was a retreat to put together the headings. Focusing on the schools. The EEF appointing individuals is moving forward. Board doesn't run it. NCAP runs it. Will be appointed at the next board meeting. They've raised over \$20,000 so far. Based on the strategic plan, Cos will have everyone go in that direction. Manageable directives. Very different year this year than last year.

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

#### NEW BUSINESS:

10. Eagle Scout Project: Tim Cook, Eagle scout senior at High school Troop 37 at Nisky Church. Graduated 5<sup>th</sup> grade at Birchwood in 2009. He needs to complete a service project for community. Would like to do a Forest classroom outside. Would like to make it more than what it currently is used for now. Big white board would be the best way, roof overtop and closing. Would like to get budget, etc over the winter to get done during April Break. Right now it's 6 benches, surfaces are looking weathered, refinished. Teachers emailed with some add ons. Bench for teacher to stand on, outdoor notebook. Budget: \$500 (450 for board) added 15% contingency. Would like approval to move forward. Also stain to give it more outdoor feel. Brian motioned and Mike Seconded. Approval of \$500 for outdoor forest classroom. Tim still has to go before the Scout board.

11. Birchwood Mission Statement: Mrs. Berndt: there is still work that they need to do for plc's. Work as the faculty, 4 pillars, vision and mission is done. Collective commitment statement working on now. Mission statement are our purpose and why we exist. Work in progress for some time. Unity, the kids sense it and positive feelings help process. Discussed how health and wellness are included. Mrs. Berndt clarified that when the statement was developed, they considered that in the realm of social development. Mrs. Berndt concluded that once done, this tool will be the compass for all programs and activities at Birchwood.

12. Nature Park Programs: Mike shared that with the success of nature park programs, it is a struggle to provide meaningful activities for such a large group of children. Options would be limiting numbers or providing the program on multiple days. Discussion commenced and the group supported Mike and Katie's idea for the program in multiple days. Next Mike raised the topic about electronic registration vs. registration via backpack mail. Mike stated that backpack mail is the preferred method for parents but it's labor intensive for Mike and Katie. Discussion ensued. The group ultimately support Nature Park program registration on line.

13. Mrs. Berndt added that the SDM committee plans to sponsor a BINGO night in January. Participants will be asked to bring bag of pennies to use as markers. It will be optional to donate the pennies to the fire department afterwards. Mrs. Berndt requested \$50 from PTO for cards and prizes. Suzanne Brooksby made a motion, Brenda Leto seconded, all approved.

14. Open house/Book Fair will be December 4.

15. JoMarie reviewed committee reports that had not been reported earlier.

16. Adjournment: Suzanne B motioned to adjourn. Brenda L seconded. Meeting adjourned at 7:45PM. Submitted by Anne Burger

Next Meeting January 6, 2016 at 6:30PM

1. Committee Reports:

Pre-K story hour: will begin on 1/7/16 and end on 3/31/16. (Thursdays 12:30-1:30) (Submitted by Soyoungh Mok)

Junior Achievement: all classes set with volunteer except 5D. I have a team member from our office who can fill in if she does not get parent volunteer. Junior Achievement has list of parents and will be sending packets and doing trainings as needed. The parents will get next steps direction letter from me this week. (Submitted by Laura Mirkovic)

Media Relations: nothing at this time. (Submitted by Laura Mirkovic)

Visiting Author: all good for now. Next steps will follow under Kate's direction. (Submitted by Laura Mirkovic)

Grocery Programs: 3201 box tops and 299 bonus box tops sent in this past week. Fall check should be \$350. (Submitted by April Dolce)

Nature Park:

1. Assisted first grade teachers to take their classes on nature trail and do StoryWalk.
2. Completed two Fall programs (Leafman Art K-2 38 kids and Mapping the Trail 3-5 23 kids). Artwork from the K-2 program will be displayed on the bulletin board by nurse's office. Cost of programs:\$37.44 for prints of kids artwork, \$65 for 5 compasses (can be reused for future programs)
3. Shed to hopefully be erected before winter; platform base has been installed (\*\*Installed this week!)
4. Spoke with Tim Cook (former Birchwood student) about possible Eagle Scout project to update trail benches and add an outdoor classroom white board. He will present his ideas and request for funding at the PTO meeting.
5. Materials purchased for structure to cover our strawberry beds (\$150). Plan to mulch with kindergartners after ground is frozen.
6. Committee requests feedback from PTO on a few issues related to after school programs.

Specifically:

- Online registration. Paper registration requires significant effort to collect and record information by parent volunteers. Also, online registration would improve completeness of information (parents often neglect to provide grade, classroom, or email contact information) and eliminate transcription errors.
- Program attendance limits; 30 kids is too large to manage and conduct meaningful programs.

Consider scheduling multiple dates for each program by default, or reducing attendance limit altogether.

How to handle program cancellations (eg due to inclement weather). How do we effectively notify parents and confirm that last minute notifications have been received? Should a "rain date" be scheduled by default? (Submitted by Katie Cowley-Cooper and Mike Cooper)

Fundraisers: Frozen Food Fundraiser Update: Fundraiser went well, we are planning on a Nov. 16th delivery. (Submitted by Jill Appert) Gift Card Fundraiser: Forms went out late last/early this week. (Submitted by Millie Gnatek)

Friends of Music: Raffle winners – Tom Parisi & Mirkovic Teal Group. Liaison thanks PTO for support with providing prize for membership drive. (Submitted by Tammy Apkarian)

Staff Appreciation Breakfast: \$191 was donated by 15 families, families provided an assortment of breakfast items, juice, etc. Wraps were ordered from Union Café and picked up by a parent volunteer. Hannaford contributed a \$25 gift card, Price Chopper a \$15 gift card, Dunkin donated 2 boxes of joe. The gift provided to the teachers this year was utensils to replenish their silverware drawer and pumpkin spice Keurig cups. There was \$77.15 left after all purchases.

(Submitted by Tiffanie Wood)

Picture Day: Picture day went well, retake is scheduled for Tuesday, 11/24. Teachers signed up 2-3 classes per slot (necessary to fit in between specials and lunches) which caused a back up. We are requesting 2 photographers next year to try to avoid the back up. Next years contract was signed and sent off. (Submitted by Tiffanie Wood)

Book Fair: Monster theme this year. Plan to increase sales include retaining children's wish lists and having scheduled family buying time. Also, retaining wish list and providing it to families with option of purchasing books on line during and after the event. Co-chairs are working to have teachers provide more items in their wish-lists as this is very popular with parents.

(Submitted by Francesca Hill)

Monster Mash: Monster Mash 2015

Well, the Monster Mash was once again a success! We made some changes this year that seemed to have been a pleasant surprise!

We had some wonderful volunteers who really kept the crowds coming through the door moving and getting families to the fun faster. They were also fabulous in the cafeteria where this year we opted to have families bring water, juice, snacks and desserts as well as a special treat from Ayelada frozen yogurt! Thanks to Anne Burger and her family once again for all the beautiful pumpkins and for manning that pumpkin decorating room, there were many wonderfully decorated pumpkins.

The 50/50 table was a success as well with a take home for the winner of \$67.00. The admission fee of \$5.00 per child and \$.50 per ticket price still worked well and we made a profit of \$1556 (current totals, waiting to see if there are anymore reimbursements)

Our magician from Magicman Entertainment did a wonderful job, was easy to work with and with no objections would be a welcomed guest in future.

Our games were great and another big thank you to our parent and middle schooler volunteers. Great job and Birchwood students had a blast. Thanks to John Leto, Chris Fusco, Rick Mizenco and Jeff Dutcher for their games.

Our DJ Evan Brooksby was fabulous and our kids and parents had a blast dancing around!

We had a great parent costume contest, they keep getting better and better every year. And lastly, we were able to fit all this in an hour and a half! It worked well for everyone and they seemed to like the time change.

There are already suggestions coming in for next year but they are add ons not instead of so all in all, success once again! (Submitted by Tara McKenna)