**Countryside PTO Board Meeting Minutes**

Countryside PTO Board Meeting, 11/7/19 7:00pm – 8:30pm Location: Countryside Library

Present: Shion (Shy) Walsh, Barbara Mauger, Lori Zinner, Xiaodan Xie, Jess Lourie, Beth Herlihy, Adam Howes, Rebecca Schwartz, Rakashi Chand

Meeting called to order: 7:05pm

**Agenda**

**Room Parent Budget** Rebecca Schwartz

For the past few years, budget for Room Parents up to $75/class. In past, funds usually not requested. PTO has limited budget, and ideally only $200 available. PTO reviewed if extra funds were available from elsewhere. Could ask parents to contribute at the event. Reviewed that goal is to be community-building and not fundraising. What to other schools do? Angier does mini-fundraiser, then divides by grade. Events are community building, but if not using funds, we should not force people to spend it, but want to avoid any unexpected costs as budget is tight.

Action items:

* Room parent coordinators are surveying Room Parents to gauge projected budgets.
* Unexpected costs under review. Art room needs supplies - ?ask for help in update. Principal Herlihy will check with art coordinator then update.

**Annual Fund Update**  Lori Zinner

Currently at 25,000 of 30K goal. 38% participation. K is 58%, 1st grade only 24%. Parents are having trouble with credit card app – Adam looking into this. Venmo does not do non-profit - takes percentage cut. Lori will monitor to see if nonprofit option available in future. Paypal still takes cut (less for nonprofit). Reviewed whether this might get more people to donate, offsetting costs of using these programs. We discussed conducting a survey to see what CS community thinks about fund (too many emails, not enough, venmo or other, other fundraiser ideas, paper vs emails) in an effort to provide additional transparency about the fun and further engage the community.

Action items:

* Lori will work on survey with details as above, Rebecca Schwartz will help
* Continue to monitor if Venmo will offer a nonprofit option

**Musical Update**  Rakashi Chand

The musical preparations are off to a great start! Large cast, and very talented. 3rd grade chorus – need to send update with dates and costs link (pending mailchimp). Scheduled for Feb 8 & Feb 9. Dress rehearsal week before. Preview on Friday (if Rae available) because sound/equipment ready. 3rd graders signing up now. Hard to not have entire school involved (equity, adequate volunteers). Concern about dwindling volunteer pool as not getting younger kids with parents involved early. Director is Rae Zakuda. Barry Eliott is Stage Manager. Raquel Fornassaro is Choreographer, Set Design, Art, 3rd grade Directory. Tammy Tong is Musical Director. And Rakashi Chand is Producer. Rakashi and others are all set with materials and have adequate resources. Kids need to practice – may need to help remind parents.

**Upcoming Events**

**-Authorfest** Kerry Prasad

Ongoing – review next time

**-Mystery Dinner** Barbara Mauger and Andrea Shapiro

Scheduled for 11/16. Fliers in boxes today for distribution tomorrow. People are buying tickets. Can’t send blast yet (mail chimp). Dessert all set. All on track and people are enthusiastic.

Action items: Mailchimp blast once available

**-ELL Thanksgiving Dinner** Xiaodan Xie

On 11/14. A celeberation for ELL families; focus is ELL community but others are invited. In past years has been mostly ELL and some PTO leaders. Waiting on mailchimp to send blast. Distributing fliers via school. Can also send via Room Parents. Put on indoor bulletin board.

Action items: Blast once mailchimp available. Xiaodan to send to Rebecca Schwartz & Jess Lourie to distribute via Room Parents. Julie to msg Abby to put on indoor bulletin board

**Event recaps**

**-Picture Day** Lori Zinner

Finished ahead of schedule. Next year, teachers to put in when specials/recess is. One photographer was not ideal – took too long with group photos, not patient with kids – won’t return next year (already handled). Next year will try to do on early release day for extra staff. Makeup day is 12/10. Should send blast.

Action items: Blast re makeup day (once mail chimp available)

**-ELL, New Family Coffee** Xiaodan Xie

Went well. No concerns

**-Halloween Party** Barbara Mauger and Sue Johnston

Went great. Spent less money. Concern about dwindling volunteer pool – multiple people will be graduating. Will start recruiting in Jan. Need a lot more volunteers to make future parties successful and sustainable.

**-Principal Coffee** Principal Herlihy

Safety day review. Weather unpredictable so cancelled walk, will be next Friday (has to coordinate with police). Also had a real shelter in place, went well.

Planning a Technology Night event with Katy Greer – Thursday 1/9 at 7pm (in place of PTO meeting) in lower caf. Ms. Greer is a former state trooper; she gives an overview of what’s hot in kids technology, and an overview of how to help keep your kids safe. ?Broadcast the event – if ok with Ms. Greer. Can do PTO meeting after?

Usually has principal coffee in Dec with teacher presentations but not sure if teachers available.

**-Walk to School** Barry Elliott

Reportedly bus drive got lost. Need to make sure all bus drivers know. Plan to host future walk events in February (weather permitting) and May. Next year Julie & Adam Lipson will run this (currently observing/mentoring).

**- Open Committees** Shion (Shy) Walsh and Kerry Prasad

Library coordinator. Lori made signup list, to put in update. Laura ideally requests people that have volunteered before (so they know where books go). People want to go when their kids are there, so should have time slots.

Action items: signup list in Update. Ideally revise this to include when classes have library.

**Mail Chimp review/update** Barbara Mauger and Adam Howes

Problem with account. Plan to upgrade to increase number of emails per month (currently 10k) – increase to allow 15k and allow to schedule blasts. Cheaper than Constant Contact. Freya had mentioned membership toolkit – Adam will look into this.

Action items: Adam is working with help desk to resolve. He will look into membership toolkit.

**Parent Survey** Julie Winsett & Principal Herlihy

At a recent meeting, Beth suggested a survey to try to engage parents. Many of our parents are experts in various areas (engineers, computers, scientists, etc). We could send a survey inviting parents to be involved, and see if there is interest in parents volunteering in classrooms. Could try to organize around a teacher unit, and have a parent provide their expertise. Should design survey - Google forms is what equity group used. Goal is to try to increase engagement and involvement. Although the focus would be on volunteering, could add other questions (will review with group) about PTO volunteering and engagement in general, directory survey (printed copy opt in/out), etc (separate from annual fund survey)

Action item: Julie to work on designing survey as above with input from Beth.

**Review of Directory** Julie Winsett

Some people have raised concern about number of directories printed, waste. Aspects of the directory are out-of-date as soon as they are printed. There are advantages to printed directory – has the parent last name cross reference, allows you to view class list even for families who did not want to be in printed directory, can look at last year class. Could allow families to opt in or opt out (and order extra copies in case people change their minds). What do other schools do? Angier has a student handbook separate from directory. Some people opt out but are on class list. Could use smaller font/less pages. Could do survey to decide if people prefer opt in or opt out. Don’t want to tie getting printed directory to donation etc as want to facilitate community.

Action items: survey before next year re opt in vs opt out. Julie to explore smaller fonts etc.

**Other topics or questions?**

5th grade bake sale – was a great success. Awaiting numbers but seemed profitable. It was suggested that for upcoming spring Election Primary - should do bake sale then too.

School committee meeting update. Met on 11/4. Equity group presented – plan for pooled fund, unclear how this will be collected. Last 3 years – CS spent less than allotted equity amount but spent more than took in but last few years had some extra purchases. CAS is 19k year. School committee has meetings which are broadcast. Adam mentioned you can sign up online for an email update from the meetings.

Link: <https://www.newton.k12.ma.us/schoolcommittee>to sign up for emails

Meeting adjourned 8:21pm