**Countryside PTO Board Meeting Minutes**

Countryside PTO Board Meeting, 10/3/19 7:00pm – 8:30pm Location: Countryside Library

Present: Shy Walsh, Lori Zinner, Barbara Walsh, Beth Herlihy, Becky Schwartz, Kerry Prasad, Julie Winsett, Jen Behr, Sandy Cerruti, Shachi Shrestha, Ryan Brennan

Meeting called to order: 7pm

**Agenda:**

**Budget** – previously approved with no objections, entered into minutes for the record;

Approving votes: Ryan Brennan, Jess Lourie, Lori Zinner, Adam Howes, Barbara Mauger, Shion Walsh, Julie Winsett via email on 9/4/19

**Welcome Coffee** Barbara Mauger and Shion Walsh

Overall was thought to be a success. No major concerns. Included tea which was popular.

Next year: good idea to include tea going forward.

**Fall picnic** Barbara Mauger and Shion Walsh

Sangeeta ran picnic this year and went very well. Overall a great success. High attendance - sold out of pizza (~50-plus pies) and all snacks. Need more rice krispies next time. No major concerns other than allotting for more food.

Next year:

* Number of pizzas - ?adequately forecasting attendance
* More rice Krispies

Spiritwear was sold at the event. Sold at-cost with no profit. Was popular, sold out of items. PTO discussed whether we should further explore Spiritwear, as a fundraiser. Lori Zinner noted First Day School Supply company also offers spiritwear, which is shipped to house; Lori suggested looking at price point, to decide if this would be good future fundraiser. Ryan suggested selling spiritwear not as a fundraiser – more about spirit than funds. We had a visit from the NPS Assistant

Action items:

* Spiritwear link open until 10/5 – should send reminder.
* Lori to explore price points re ?future fundraiser – although Board is mixed on using this as Fundraiser & should be further discussed

**Back to School night** Barbara Mauger & Shion Walsh & Principal Herlihy

Principal Herlihy got good feedback from the event. Seemed to be a success, with no major concerns. It was noted that the splitting of PTO presentations was good, with multiple speakers – kept audience engaged and was informative.

**Annual Fund update** Lori Zinner

Brochures went out on Tuesday at school – distributed in classrooms to oldest sibling. Concern some classrooms (2SJ and 2W) did not receive. Collecting via PTO website (pay pal) and checks. Looking at Venmo for next year – can link to PTO checking account. Last year, 49.4% contributed. Kerry reports this is on par for other Newton schools – usually ~40 to 47% participation. Zervais had 72% participation, which is outlier and another school was lower ~30%. Fund open thru 10/31. Will be advertised further in weekly update and email blasts. Discussed tracking in Mail chimp how many are opening and reading.

Discussed strategies to increase participation. Discussed having a reward if whole class participates, but don’t want kids to feel bad as it is not their decision; perhaps having a goal of 80% classroom participation. Some expressed concern this could lead to unhealthy competition. Need to avoid any participation of “pay to play”. Need to be careful with incentivizing Board to donate - might discourage people from joining board. Last year, Fund was approached from a fundraising perspective, but optics were wrong. Last year, some families received personalized requests when they had already donated. Discussed avoiding mailing requests to house or personal emails. Room parents can send requests to entire class, but should not know who has not donated, and no personal emails.

Action items:

* Principal Herlihy will email staff to make sure brochures are distributed. 2nd grade (St Jean) and Restivo did not get (2SJ and 2W).
* Laurie is Exploring Venmo for next year
* Barbara will explore if mail chimp records as “read” if people open email in preview frame
* For email blasts: Need to make clear these contributions are not pooled. Provide a break down of what Fund is spent on.
* Strategies will incorporate lessons learned from last year
* Host a coffee to explain Equity Policy, and to educate parents contributions to Annual Fund are not pooled. Kerry to attend and answers questions.

**Equity**

Equity Policy was reviewed. This was brought up at a recent room parent meeting and there were concerns. Parents concerned about classroom needs and wish lists. It was discussed that long-term, city should be paying for these items, although it was noted that currently they are not, which is a difficult situation. Strategies to support classrooms while abiding by Equity guidelines were discussed. It was discussed that if classrooms raise extra funds for teacher gifts, beyond allotted guidelines, could pool these monies, and then divide amongst aides, specialists etc. It was reviewed that teachers do not expect anything. ELL teachers do not routinely get gifts although not all children utilize this. Longterm strategies to support teachers, classrooms, schools, and adequate NPS support were discussed.

Action items:

* Consider pooling additional funds raised for teacher gifts, to distribute amongst aides and specialists

**Creative Arts & Sciences** Kerry Prasad

Authorfest will be hosted 11/4 – 11/8. Plan to bring all the authors the same week to CS. Host 1 author per grade per year – author will visit each classroom with a presentation. It was noted this is a nice, diverse group of authors. Other NPS schools have a similar program planned. Librarian does author studies projects with students, will try to incorporate posters, projects for these. 3 of these guests are known as illustrators, and will involve art teacher as well. On Wed 11/5 3:30-530pm, the authors will be at Zervas for author meet and greets, book signing and sale. Principal Herlihy suggested allowing families to purchase book and get signed even if they can’t attend. This will be hosted by Newtonville Books will run; they will donate 10% give-back to schools. Plan is to spread word and tell kids.

Schedule:

Mon 11/4 Jef Czekaj gr 1

Tues 11/5 Vita Murrow gr 3

Wed 11/6 Ruth Chan K, Eric Velasquez gr 2

Thurs 11/7 Ammi-Joan Paquette gr4

Fri 11/8 Dana Alison Levy gr 5

Action items:

* Publicizing above events
* Allow families to purchase book for signing if can’t attend

**Upcoming events**

**Picture Day** Lori Zinner

Picture day is on 10/29. Next year will be September. Board reviewed when primary day is, tn ensure no conflict. People like photography; same group (Coffee Pound) as last year. They usually send 4 photographers – 3 for group phots, and 1 for individuals. Lori will send signup genius for volunteers to help. Location discussed – not a good outdoor space with adequate sun; need to avoid too bright. Reviewed ?mural although maybe not enough space. Reviewed 5th grade will be on structure. Will need to decide on location in advance so photographers can plan. Discussed logistics – CCC Aftercare starts at 12noon and they use Cafetorium space. Discussed timing, ?before PE; teachers signup and pick times. Lori will review times and make sure not during recess.

Action items:

* Lori to decide on locations - ?mural
* Review times, ensure not during recess

**ELL Coffee** Kerry Prasad

ELL and New Family coffee will be combined, on 10/11. Discussed translating items for ELL, which we just did for influenza.

Action item:

* Ask ELL to provide Annual fund translation, send to Xia and cc Lori

**Principal coffee**  Principal Herlihy

Will be on 10/18 at 8:30am. Plan to discuss safety. Superintendent Fleishman recently sent a safety email. Plan to preview safety plan and safety day with parents. New items include responding to hostile event. It was reviewed that focus is on keeping kids safe, and ensuring aduilts/educators are comfortable with the plan and appropriately trained. Will emphasize that what is taught to kids is to listen to teacher, and will be age-appropriate. Safety Day is on 11/1 - will have fire alarm, walk outside, take attendance, then walk to Brown Middle School. Newton Police will help with crossing street. Will be practice for kids, educators/adults, and crisis team. Students will return, and have recess and snack break. Also will practice shelter in place and lockdown drill. City officials will observe and give feedback. City prefers is to do all of this in 1 day. Focus of hostile event practice is to make teacher comfortable. Principal Herlihy wants parents to have a sense of this before safety day. First priority is kids safety, and is important for adults to practice and be ready. After Superintendent Fleishman’s email, teachers hung sign. It was reviewed that if any parents are upset or have concerns, they should reach out to Principal Herlihy, Nurse Murphy, etc. Discussed live-streaming – if there is secure link, will try to do this. It was reviewed we should work with ELL to ensure there is understanding and no concerns.

Action items:

* Try to live stream if secure link; could also live stream PTO meetings
* Principal Herlihy will work on invitation
* ?Kerry will reach out to ELL

**Halloween party**

Halloween party is on 10/26, 5:30-8:30. K-2 first 1.5 hrs (5:30-7pm), then second half (7-8:30pm) is older kids. Same DJ as last year, Sue just got a bunch of prizes. We have games. Sue will send signout genius with update. Donation jar for suggested donations. Will have concessions. Cleanup team. Will not have haunted hallway this year – was too time consuming and complicated in terms of yield; now concentrating on Cafetorium, gym, one entrance. Pumpkin contest planned. Need to remember to clean up pumpkins afterwards - can put outside, compost etc.

**Committees** Barbary Mauger and Shion Walsh

Volunteers needed for open committees. Strategies reviewed to improve participation -can try to circulate info to community about which positions are open; people might be interested and not know a committee is open. Particularly need to work on reaching parents who aren’t at pickup and drop-off.

Open committees:

Special ed liason – Kerry approached a few people, 1 is pending

Holiday gift drive – pending

Teacher lunch – Lori helping, Manny to get food. Kerry- try to get a young parent involved. Pending

K screening – Jen Behr. It was reviewed can’t be on Tues; plan to do on school day; maybe use Aftercare room. Becky can ask room parents.

STRIDE Principal Herlihy

This is the last year of STRIDE, as CS started ABA program. Discussed doing something to celebrate for sendoff.

**Columbus Day/Indigenous People Day** Shachi Shrestha

On behalf of FORJ, the concerns regarding “Columbus Day” were reviewed, given concerns of honoring association with genocide, and teaching children accurate history. Many places have already made this change. Brown Middle School has changed to Indigenous Peoples Day/Columbus Day. Reviewed it was brought before Newton City Council last year although not resolved; likely will not be addressed this election cycle. Some groups see this as national pride day, and can be contentious. Reviewed it could be confusing if there are 2 names for the holiday. School directory already printed, and was left as Columbus Day to align with the online NPS calendar (to avoid confusion). Reviewed hyphenating, to acknowledge both sides and not exclude; avoids confusion of 2 names; this also could give opportunity to phase out in future. Discussed having FORJ include item in weekly update, to educate people and offer resources to learn more.

Action items:

* Decision to hyphenate
* Item in weekly update from FORJ to explain

**Musical**

Some parents have expressed concerns as K-2 now not part of musical. It was reviewed there are not enough parent volunteers, and already very challenging for these volunteers. Also equity concerns – Ms. Gantush can’t help teach songs – so less resources for help. Rehearsals can be chaotic, without enough parent supervision, and different degrees of chaperoning. Challenging for kids that want to participate and learn. Given these issues, it seemed scaling the musical back this year was best. Was originally going to be just grades 4-5, and we were able to add 3rd grade. Also need to be mindful of seats, tickets. Not adequate space for 100 kids – would need to consider alternate space to be bigger cast. Concerns about upset parents, impact on PTO annual fund etc.

**Blue Zone**

Blue zone continues to be problematic. Some people are parking and walking to front door. Or parking in bus zone (yellow). Repeat offenders. Concern this is very dangerous. Is most problematic between 8:15-8:20. New no idling signs are good. Related concerns about children unsupervised prior to start of school – using PG unsupervised, etc. Concern for liability. Parents have been reminded there is no adult supervision prior to school start. Kids should not be unsupervised, and should come in when 1st bell rings. Kids who ride bus are CS responsibility once at bus stop. Teachers cannot be responsible prior to school starting. Also problems with parents parking in teacher parking spots. It was reviewed that we have asked Newton Police to assist, but they consider this a lower priority, and not as poor a situation as at some other schools. They are monitoring new 3-way stop sign – it was discussed that this is a great addition. Principal Herlihy will mention these concerns at the new family coffee.

**Comments and questions**

Teacher support was discussed. Concerns regarding contract negotiation.

Meeting adjourned: 8:34pm

Next meeting: 11/7/19; location TBD