

Weston PTO Board Meeting Minutes

September 8, 2009

Present: Ellen Livingston, Tina Chartrand, Karyn Taylor, Danielle Black, Jerina Harris, Deb Sullivan, Joan Heilbronner, Kim Costello, Adrian Proll, Jane Fong, Carolann Augustine, Greg Augustine, Kelly Renner, Cheryl Maloney, Ed Heller, Laura Dubin, Suzanne Lenox, Beth Keane, Alicia Abad, Deb Egan, Linda Angelucci, Joanne Melikian-Cate, Aviva Jeruchim, Jane Ortiz, Robin Ewald, JoyAnn Yarde, Helen Poon, Lisa Williams, Rebecca Stevenson, Jean O'Connor, Brooke Tiller, Lisa Green, Mandie Jordan-Smith

The meeting was called to order at 7:29 pm.

Opening Business:

Treasurer's Report: Tina Chartrand

The budget is in. Tina asked for a vote to add \$150 to the budget, all were in favor. Memberships were down \$5,000 but still good. Postage was a little bit over budget. The mail system may need to be looked at as far as sending things 1st class versus bulk mail. The PTO website has check request forms available. Nothing will be reimbursed without a receipt.

Superintendent's Report: Cheryl Maloney

The schools opened last week with great weather. The buildings are really clean. All reports from faculty are good. Thanks for the support from the parents at home sending their kids ready to start another school year.

Weston High School was voted the Top High School in Boston Magazine! This is wonderful.

Regarding the H1N1 flu, Patty Wright-the new nurse leader and Cheryl have met with community leaders to discuss this issue.

A survey will be sent out via survey monkey, regarding the H1N1 flu. Parents will be asked for feedback on three questions, first, will their child(ren) be vaccinated this year, second, where will they get their vaccinations (i.e. doctors office, clinic, etc.) and last, would there be interest in a town clinic which would immunize all of the Weston school children against H1N1.

The H1N1 flu directives have been modified to state that any child with H1N1 flu can not return to school until 24 hours after fever has ended.

School Committee's Report: Ed Heller, Maryanne Rogers

Field School project is still on hold. No action was taken at the July 29th MSBA Board Meeting regarding the Weston "Statement of Interest (SOI)." The district submitted the SOI in October of 2008 as the first step in pursuing state funding to help offset the cost of addressing the facility needs of the Field School. If the project is selected to receive state funding, at least 30% of qualified project costs would be paid through the MSBA. The next MSBA Board Meeting will be held on September 29. Following that meeting, the School Committee will re-schedule the Town Hall meeting to discuss the status of the Field School Project.

Field School is in a historical district so there has been much discussion on renovation vs. replacement in keeping with the historical community.

Another project being looked at for renovation is the High School Science facility. When the school was renovated in the 1990's, this area was not done. The weight room and trainer facilities are also being looked at.

Legal Council: Aviva Jeruchim

It has been a quiet summer. Aviva asked that if anyone has any legal questions to please contact her on her office telephone (617) 720-6047 rather than her home phone which is published in the PTO book.

New Business: Ellen Livingston

There have been a lot of school events such as meet and greets and new family coffees. Ellen and Danielle have asked that if there are any changes to meetings posted in the PTO book that they are contacted so that they will have an opportunity to attend.

The PTO will be entering the digital frontier joining Facebook and Twitter! Ellen will administer it at first and then the webmasters will take over. The group name for both will be Weston PTO. This is a great way to push out a lot of information. This is very exciting and there is a hope that everyone will join.

A question of privacy came up in the discussion. Further discussion is needed.

School Council Elections will take place September 21-25, with an extension through the weekend if needed. This will take place on survey monkey.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

CALENDAR PRODUCTION: Kim Costello, Robin Ewald

The 2009-2010 calendar production was a success with the help of school staff, Robin Ewald and Ellen. Using the pre populated templates for the 2nd year helped a lot and made the production process very smooth.

Process:

The administrators, PTO chairs, and faculty submitters had the opportunity to review 3 drafts of the calendar before it went to the printer on August 5th. The calendar drafts were available as hard copies in the schools, as well as electronic versions I emailed to all "editors." In addition to the 3 official drafts, the calendar team reviewed an additional 10 internal versions.

Additional Improvements:

The editing process for the upcoming 2010 calendar has been streamlined to include the use of a laptop and use of software for calendar volunteers to manipulate data when needed.

Next year we will also send around the PTO org chart for everyone to check their emails and phone numbers.

The titles for Calendar and Membership have been changed to Calendar Production and Membership/Renewal.

Areas for Improvement:

Student Directory Form (2nd address listing)-Add a line in BOLD stating that the request must be made in writing every year.

Figure out a way for those parents who have already established a second address to continue without submitting the second address each year

Include second addresses in the schools database

Written and electronic requests regarding student data, i.e., change of address/corrections are sent to one central location to a designated person either at the Case House or to Diane Kaskon to update the student database immediately.

Many parents were upset about having to call or go to each of their child's schools to change their information.

We could improve this process by making this accessible online or going to one central person.

Student Database needs to be reconciled before handed over to the calendar chairs. Improving the process of inputting data from one central location would streamline this process.

Editing the typesetter - An inordinate amount of time was spent editing the typesetter's errors or oversights. Misspellings, spacing/alignment issues and missing events were just some of the recurring problems we had to resolve. These mistakes were not generated by any of the "editors" or the calendar team. I found myself wishing that I could edit and manipulate the data myself, which would have been faster, easier and offered more control throughout the process.

Moving forward calendar chairs will have access to a laptop and use of software to manipulate data.

Summary:

Overall, calendar production went very smoothly, but opportunities for improvement remain. Many quick and easy fixes will be made as part of this year's calendar process. Other needed improvements will take time, Robin and I plan to talk with Ilene about the editing process and how she can still be involved. We believe having the ability to directly edit the data will save time, money and provide better accuracy. We also plan to address the ongoing database issue with those involved.

A lot more emphasis is being placed on the directory and the feeling is it is becoming the be all and end all of school information, which can be lot of pressure for a volunteer position. We now have the fire and police department requesting a copy. Robin and I will talk with Ellen and school administration about involving other school personal or at least a contact person from the school after the calendar/directory is published.

As the calendar team moves forward on these issues we will be sure to share what we learn and make further recommendations.

MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL: Jane Fong, Lisa Williams

The 2009-2010 PTO membership drive was off to a slow start this year. Despite announcements through the PTO Admin page, school listservs, Westword and sandwich boards placed around town, we had 321 confirmed members at the end of May. This was down from 577 the previous year, a decrease of 45%. So, in an effort to raise membership registration, we sent out eye-catching announcements weekly until the end of the drive. Ellen Livingston, our PTO president, wrote an article for the Town Crier, describing the role of PTO in our school community to raise awareness. By the end of June, we saw better numbers, although we were still off by 21% (713 vs. 903) in confirmed members from the same time last year, and down 23% in contributions.

Since the membership drive ended, families are still signing up on line. The back-to-school welcome coffees are also bringing in new members. As of today, confirmed membership is off by 8% at 922, and contributions by 10%, a decrease of about \$5000. We will be offering three more opportunities for people to get their calendars right away. We will be a Case House this Friday, September 11th and Monday, September 14th, for people to sign up for membership and pick up extra calendars. Membership will also be attending the fall meeting for METCO families this Thursday, September 10th. This

event usually brings in a number of membership signups; a great opportunity to reach out to our Boston families.

It has been a strange year, but with the busiest work basically done, we are hoping for a few more signups this fall and a quiet winter.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH: Carolann Augustine, Deb Sullivan

The New Family Ice Cream Social on August 27th went well. Approximately 75-100 people who were either new to the community or whose children were entering the public schools for the first time, joined for ice cream and fun behind the Field School. We want to thank all the school administrators and PTO members who came. A special thanks to the children of a few PTO parents who did an amazing job scooping ice cream, cleaning up and making sure the kids attending this event were entertained.

For the upcoming year, we plan to hold the following drives:

UNICEF– October

Bristol Lodge – November/December

Cradles to Crayons – February

Reach out and Read – March

Community Day – April

Buddy Dog - May

In addition to the worthy drives we've conducted in the past, we're excited to promote both reading and hands on help to our children with the addition of a Reach out and Read Drive and Community Day. We're working through the logistics of these new events and look forward to making a place for them in the Community Outreach schedule this year.

We have a list of 23 parents across the schools who've expressed interest in volunteering for Community Outreach, which is fantastic. We'll be in touch with them in the coming weeks to review our schedule and see where they'd like to help.

WESTWORD: Laura Dubin, Greg Augustine

The summer was great. Next year there will be a start date in the calendar for Westword. At the end of last year there was a meeting with the school committee to discuss the best usage for Westword vs. Listserv. Westword will be more press release oriented. It will be less wordy with information stating where, when and the link. The deadline for submitting information to Westword is Thursdays by 3pm. Listserv will be used for getting out information from the principal or the schools.

HIGH SCHOOL: Jean O'Connor, Marion Packs

Year began with a Freshman orientation and barbeque and a "senior boot" serving breakfast on Thursday. Class of 2010 will take part in the Sept 11th flag placing on Friday.

Our first PTO meeting is on 9/17, WHS 411, with the second on 10/22, our first principal's coffee.

We are co-sponsoring a Head Trauma meeting on Sept 21st with the Middle School and the Athletic department.

PTO was represented on the planning committee for the 9th Grade Health and Wellness Forum taking place on 9/21 as well as for the 9th Grade Parent Guide.

MIDDLE SCHOOL: Joan Heilbronner, Deb Egan

Despite challenges posed by the significant increase in the number of students in our hallways, everything is off to a great start at the Middle School. The two largest classes in the school system (grades 6 and 8) are currently at the Middle School, but the faculty and the administration have handled it without a hitch. We haven't even heard any complaints about the lunch lines!

Beautification: Leslye Fligor did a beautiful job on the planters outside the school, just in time for new family orientation.

New Family Orientation: The Middle School hosted a new family orientation meeting at the Middle School on Monday August 31. We had a very large turn out – 23 of the 38 new students attended. We once again set up new families with volunteer mentor families, and this process went well and seemed to ease some of the transition concerns. Many thanks to Doreen Shytle for heading up this effort again.

Volunteer Orientation Meeting: We have our volunteer orientation meeting scheduled for this Thursday the 10th.

School Store: The school store is open for business. We experimented for the first time with opening shop after school, and it was a great success! Regular hours will commence this week.

FIELD SCHOOL: Linda Angelucci, Adrian Proll

The Field School opened a bit different this year. Instead of having the beautification committee dress up the front of the building only, they also included the side entrance so that the kids could enjoy it when they entered the building from the buses. Banners were also put inside the entrance to greet the children as they arrived.

The welcome coffee on Friday was attended by 45 parents. There are 4th and 5th grade forums coming up and the 1st Principals coffee will be next month.

COUNTRY SCHOOL: Laura Miller, Brooke Tiller

The school year is off to a great start at the Country School. We held our Room Parent Orientation this afternoon and all classrooms are covered from Pre-School through 3rd grade. Tomorrow morning we will hold the New Family Coffee to welcome the 15 new families to the Country School as well as to welcome the new pre-school families. We have 3 new teachers this year: Mr. Morong in 3rd Grade, Ms. Biggins in 2nd Grade, and Mrs. Morong as part of the job-share team in 2nd Grade. In addition, Ms. Carey moved up from 2nd Grade to 3rd Grade. We have 2 open school council positions that we hope to fill through the election process on Survey Monkey. Our first council meeting will be on Wednesday, October 7th at 3 PM. All are welcome to come!

WOODLAND SCHOOL: Joanne Melikian-Cate, Rebecca Stevenson

Woodland School is off to a great start! Not only did the Kindergarten team get balloons from the PTO, but we also provided them for the other grades as well. Woodland was a very happy place the first morning children got off the bus. We were also fortunate enough to have a first grade parent plant the buckets by the front door so those looked beautiful as well. One of our priorities this year will be to make sure the front entry always looks happy and welcoming.

We held our Room Parent Orientation this afternoon, and it went very smoothly. All who attended seem excited and eager to help this year at Woodland. It was nice to see several returning room parents as well as many new faces this year.

This Friday, September 11th we are hosting a coffee at 9AM for all families new to Weston schools attending Woodland. Unfortunately, the date was incorrect in the calendar, but our invites had the correct date, and Woodland called the new families

We have the following events coming up in the next few weeks:

Back to School Night (K and 1)	September 15th
Back to School Night (2 and 3)	September 22nd
School Pictures	October 2 nd

CREATIVE ARTS: Lisa Green, Mandie Jordan-Smith

Creative Arts is off to a great start with 8 new members and most of the existing members continuing on the committee. Our first committee meeting is September 14 where we look forward to meeting everyone and updating them on what we have planned. We have many programs already booked for the Fall and we will be starting to preview over the next few weeks for the Spring. The first performance of the year is George Russell (lively gospel with musical history) coming to the Middle School on Sept

25. Then we have a very busy month in October with Urban Improv (bullying program) on Oct 6 for the 7th grade and Theatre Espresso (Uprising on King Street - Boston Massacre) on October 8 for the 8th grade. We are also planning to bring Thomas Burns (a muralist who has painted murals for the High School, Country and Woodland) back to work with the Middle School art teachers and children, creating a mural for the school foyer. Thomas hopes to be starting this in October and it will take approximately 6 weeks to complete. Jennie Lucas has been very busy booking authors for Wordfest. We have Sarah Pennypacker visiting 2nd grade on Sept 21 and Barbara O'Connor visiting 5th grade on Sept 29-Oct 1. During October we have the authors Trenton Lee Stewart coming to Field School on Oct 20 and Suzy Kline visiting 2nd grade. Creative Arts is off to a flying start and we look forward to enriching our schools over the coming months with exciting performers and authors.

SCIENCE COUNCIL: Betsy Romeri, Denise McGeough

Not present.

WEBMASTERS: Beth Keene, Alicia Abad, Suzanne Lenox

It was a quiet summer, most of the changes had occurred in the spring. Calendar downloads are at 17 ½%.

The webmasters asked for the school chairs and committee chairs to send updates to them.

WSEPAC: Marcy Dorna

We would like to start using constant contact for speakers.

WEEFC: Kelly Renner

There will be a phone-a-thon on September 29, 30 and October 1st. The goal is to have 100% of the parents support 100% of the kids.

On September 15th at 11am there will be a kick off meeting for the auction at Danielle Black's house. This year they will ask people to rsvp soon because the venue will be smaller, more intimate again this year and there will be a limit to how many people can attend. The Auction date is November 7th. Don't miss it.

PARENT EDUCATION: Barbara Burgess, Connie Bendetson

They would like to have an individual volunteer to speak to the Principals at each school to find out what speakers they would like to have come to their schools. If anyone is interested in this please contact either Barbara or Connie.

There was a speaker at the Middle school that spoke about social networking (facebook) and internet safety.

There is an interest in bringing someone in, at the High school level, to speak about something a little different, out of the ordinary from past speakers. Possibly to broaden the horizon of the audience or to be motivational, to give a WOW moment. Please let Parent Education know if you have any ideas for a great speaker.

METCO: Jerina Harris

There was a meeting on August 27th to meet with new families.

Although there have been a lot of budget cuts, we have added 14 new kindergarteners to the program and kept the bus drivers and the late buses.

Ideas are needed for fund raising. Please contact Jerina with ideas.

There is an Ice Cream Social September 26th from 3-5pm at the Field School.

Jerina reported that they are working on an event for spring. A Weston Reunion for Weston and METCO alumni at Regis College. The President of Spellman College will be a guest speaker. No date has been set yet.

WCCA: Barbie Cobb

Kindergarten orientation parties for Country and Woodland Schools were held on Thursday, September 3rd and were very well attended. The annual Kindergarten Coffee was held on Friday, September 4th and a big thank you to those from the PTO who were able to attend.

Our fall cocktail party will be on Saturday, October 3rd.

Our annual Tavernside kick-off event will be on Saturday, September 26th from 10am to noon (to coincide with the Golden Ball Saturday.) There will be a book swap, bake sale and lemonade stand, with all proceeds being donated to charity.

Our fall speaker will be on Thursday, October 14 at the Weston Library (7:30pm), and will feature Bob Bigelow, who will speak on adult involvement in youth sports, from his book "Just Let the Kids Play." This event is being co-sponsored by the Weston Boosters, the Weston Recreation Department, and the Wayland Children and Parents Association. Finally, our outreach drive is a winter coat drive for the women and children at Sandra's

Lodge in Waltham. The drive will run from Monday September 21st through Friday, October 2. There will be a donation bin in the lobby of the Community Center.

The meeting adjourned at 8:59 pm.