PTO meeting

10/6/2021

7:00pm via zoom

In attendance – Beth Herlihy, Lori Zinner, Sue Johnston, Anne Dixon, Carolyn Virgilio, Barbara Mauger,

Sharon Morgenbesser, Nick Jathar, Shion (Shy) Walsh, Jess Lourie, Joris Gjata, Lori Yurgelun, Liz Flaig, Jie Liu, Karen Jacobson-Sive, Maegan Spontak, Julie Winsett, Steven Telio, Betsy Murry

Introductions

CAS Update – Karen Jacobson-Sive

Karen is Co-Chair along with Rakshaa Dadlani. CAS is ~40% of budget, and they try to bring 3 enrichment programs per grade per year. Last year was limited and smaller given COVID. Working with Stacey Moriarty at NPS level. Likely will have Author Fest- authors will visit, allow parents to visit, sign books. Will have outside if cannot have indoors given covid. Likely in April/the spring. Will also host authors for each grade level. Will try to do before Nov so can be outside with tents still up; also grade 3-5 has mcas in spring, so will try to do now. Receive $1800 from district. Working out a few logistics about timing etc. They are working with teacher liaisons to determine preferred authors. For 1st grade, Kemp Harris, Emily Boone, bubbles. Second grade Kemp Harris, Wingmasters. 3rd grade – Wompanoag Native American presenter. Looking for tree expert. 4th grade origami. 5th grade wingmasters.

Had meeting with grade level reps, a few new reps are joining this year.

Principal’s Update – Principal Herlihy

Recapped of when our kids last had a “normal school year” which was 2+ years ago or never. Starting slowly, building sense of community, working on social-emotional learning. Working on cooperative learning.

Starting fall assessments. Kids are doing great, very resilient. Working on hiring staff.

Lunch – 3 options. Lunch in front of school, which is close to caf, and less distractions. If drizzling, under tents. If heavy rain or thunder, eat inside; kids are spread out and assigned seating.

Testing. Run by CIC, which runs school testing both in Newton and at state. CIC has been understaffed, and is working at district level to upscale and optimize operations; district team is actively advocating and helping. Now sending 2 teams, which is working better. 75% of students signed up. No positives from pooled testing yet. Test and stay working well. Have plan for contact testing in place.

Not having flu clinic at school this year.

Budget update – Nick Jathar

Last year, 18k positive balance; given covid, a lot of the traditional activities were not done. Last year, fundraising netted 30K – annual fund, 5th grade experience, Fun Run. PTO sponsored community building events – pet calendar, musical, trivia night, MCF. For CAS and equity, only spent 4k, which was unusually low given covid. For this year, prelim budget formed with treasurer and Co-Ps.

Forecast 20k in revenue. 61K expenses. Net deficit of ~40K. This does not include the Annual Fund, which raises ~30k usually. Have identified 6-7 activities for upcoming year. Now working with past activity leaders to coordinate these. Current activities being considered for the year include: Rafi Nova mask drive, Pet calendar, Musical, Trivia Night, MCF, Movie Night, Fall Picnic, Halloween party, Game Nights, Spring raffle and auction, Fun Run.

Annual Fund – Joris Gjata

Annual Fund has started. Brochures have gone home with students. Deadline is Nov. 7.

It was mentioned that with future events outdoors, should think about port-o-potties potentially, as parents can’t use indoor toilets.

Past event recaps

Welcome coffee – 2nd day of school. Good turnout. Did food and coffee, no food this year to be cautious given covid.

Teacher breakfast – PTO provided breakfast for teachers on their first day back. Carolyn Virgilio helped organize. It was much appreciated by staff.

Fall Picnic. Sangeeta Jathar organized. Huge success. Families were excited and happy to connect. Lots of snacks and drinks were purchased; extras were put in PTO closet, available for future events. Pizza from Oak Hill, 11.25 per pizza, historically used sweet tomatoes as CS alum.

She mentioned allergy concerns were raised about food at PTO events and there was discussion of different ideas. People suggested could have guidelines as PTO board; could try to have allergy friendly options although have to balance costs and make sure PTO does not incur extra costs; be mindful of budget and make sure PTO does not incur extra costs. Can share vendor info with families in advance, in terms of cross contamination or vendor, so families can decide in advance if this works for them. Could see if there is a list of allergies present in kids in school and try to address this. Could have a committee of people who are interested in working on this. Can share in advance what people are serving/what restaurants are being used so parents can decide themselves. Some voiced inclusivity concerns. Some expressed that parents’ should take care of their own kids and eat before or after the picnic or event; PTO should not be responsible for people’s food and safety. Some expressed you cannot accommodate all allergies and also food preferences and intolerances. People voiced that the PTO has done an outstanding job at school events such as popsicles at the fun run/field day. Lori, Anne and Sue will think about making criteria for events going forward.

Future events

Picture day on Oct 20. Will send email reminders. Raises money for school. Pictures outside. Will have parent volunteers to help.

Halloween party – Sue Johnston

Have begun planning last week. Plan for party outside. Planned for October 30. Plan to split K-2 and 3-5. Have hired DJ. Plan on food, games, volunteer opportunities.

Green Team – Julie Winsett

After covid hiatus, plan to resume the student green team. First meeting this Friday. Meeting outside, after school on Fridays. As it gets colder, may meet on weekends or explore alternate options. Smaller group this year of energized and interested kids.

Big green jumpstart – Joris Gjata

Joris applied for and was granted a $2000 grant to increase outdoor learning. Outside is safer, and healthier; these grants help schools start on a path, start a journey, to be outside more. We have 2 primary outdoor spaces – the raised garden beds, and the outside classroom. The grant will provide monies to facilitate using these spaces; will have 2 sheds, to store outdoor materials. Clipboards, yoga mats to sit on, gloves, garden tools. Need to teach and support teachers. Money will come to school; needs to be spent by a certain date in Nov. Principal Herlihy shared that teachers are already spending a lot of time outside. Could incorporate with science. Such as butterfly garden, weather. Could do by grade level, during community time, or during science time.

Directory updates – Julie Winsett

Working on acquiring info. Awaiting staff list, and class lists. There are discussions about the class list release. Could ask room parents to communicate the need to sign up. Is challenging, as this is how PTOs communicate with and connect with the community. Maybe could give Ms. Wallace a list to review. Could see if Julie Garan can give a membership toolkit report on numbers. 359 students registered. Will allow people to opt-in. Can put PTO intro pages on website with link to PDF.

ELL Coffee

Scheduled for Oct 21, 8:10-8:40am. Can put blurb in CS news, and upcoming events.

Adjourned at 9:06pm