PTO meeting

4/13/23

Location – The Boughan house and hybrid, on google meet

In attendance – Principal Herlihy, Chelsea Boughan, Melissa Monokroussos, Lori Zinner, Punam Sharma, Zina Gomes Liss, Amye Kurson-Collins, Janet Cooper, Steve Lee, Rakshaa Dadlani, Jill Canelli, Adam Bernstein, Sue Johnston, Sara Ocana Lopes

Called to order at 7:08pm

Principal Update – Principal Herlihy

Approaching hectic time of year. End of year can be anxiety-provoking for kids. Focusing on letting kids be in their grade and enjoy their time now, not focusing on the next year.

Difficult time with budget as well. Facing ELL aide cut, K asst reduction, loss of 4th grade section, strings program. May also affect specialist allocation. Difficult time for teachers. Class size was discussed, threshold unclear if additional kids join, classrooms are small and hot.

A lot of great events; art show went well; fun run went well. 5th grade events and lots of fun community events planned, want to make sure kids have fun and aren’t stressed.

Had an architect visit for the upcoming building plans.

SEPAC – Jill

DEI community forum – working with director of diversity equity inclusion on an event and working on sepac awards. Advocating for budget , advocating for class size, affects marginalized groups, kids with disabilities, worried about special ed aides; want to take sure accessible, inclusive piece is part of the conversation about the budget.

SEPAC – UOD was a big convo earlier in the year, there were concerns about the program funding. Want to make sure funds are used to promote inclusive communities.

Newton literacy collaborative. Mayor gave schools ARPA funds to update literacy curriculum, which has not been updated since 2012. Schools are currently using Fontass & Punell, a non-DESE approved curriculum; looking at using something that is focused more on the science of reading. Piloting 3 other reading curriculums at HM, Underwood and MS, all 3 are DESE-approved curriculums. Meeting with NPS every 6 weeks to get updates. This is group of parents who have early childhood education experience, and advocating for science-based approach. Looking at peer-reviewed, high quality research studies that are inclusive and promote the “science of reading”. Goal is to make sure every child learns to read, and maximize opportunities each kid has.

Budget – Steve

Have 50k budgeted, will spend 55k, but have raised money, almost ~75k. Parent party with auction raised 20k. Positioned to have a great end of the year, have a big springfest, but also have money to carry over. With the additional funds, looking at having line item called “Countryside Cares” – to support CS families. Talked to SW about Countryside Cares - things like winter gear ie snowpants and boots, Thanksgiving grocery cards might roll into this, also discussed scholarship for summer camp. Looking at putting 10k towards this, will be one-time item. Also looking at annual fund ask, although is in line with other schools. This year we met annual fund goal, although does not always happen.
Thinking about next year fundraising strategies and timing, it’s good to have annual fund in fall, to know we have funds for the year ahead, then could taper down fundraising in spring.
We have equity cap, so can’t spend money on curriculum items.
Question about giving back to community and teachers, things that will benefit all kids and all community.
Also looking at funding field trips, giving each grade a budget for fields trips.
Some extra fundraising money can go towards Springest.
May also have some money for Halloween party. Need new decorations, tent etc.

TA week. Looking at creative ideas for the week like doing something for the teachers each day. This would include teachers and staff, so large numbers. Can do chalk the walk for teachers; could be banner, so it is displayed. Could have pre-printed end-of-year cards for teachers. It was reviewed we did handmade cards for teachers last year.

Can give some more money towards library books before end of year.

Springfest – Chelsea

Planned for June 6. Will have inflatables/bouncy structures with obstacle course. Will have food trucks, likely Trolley Dogs and Naco Taco, and also families can bring own food/picnic. Will have kona ice truck, with free tickets for kids. Will have table with free drinks, water, juice boxes. DJ Stacey, with bubbles and music. Gaga ball. Will have hydroblaster instead of dunk tank. Will explore latex allergies. Will try to recruit HS volunteers to help run stations – have had 2 former CS kids volunteer. Have permit, insurance.

Auction & Parent Party

Auction was fun. Was circulated to the community and to other schools; win win because people got items in return, and money given back to CS. Auction was fun, community building event, and as a bonus, raised money. People expressed thanks to Amye for her fundraising.

Parent Party - sold 78 tickets, prob 65 people there.

CAS updates – Rakshaa

All presentations are booked. April 24 - Wingmasters grade 1 and 5. May 2 - Day in Ghana. May 15 - grade 3 Annawon Weedon. May 19 - Susan Tang, grade 4. June 1 – k science of bubbles. June 2 – gr 2 honeybees, grade 5 - ocean trash from science and author. June 16 – author
$16,218 final budget for CAS this year, which came in under-budget. Most were in-person. One presenter was virtual but was very high-quality so brought her.
Leadership - Rakshaa will step down, and Lori will help next year. Everyone expressed thanks to Rakshaa for her excellent work this past year.

Going forward, need more volunteers for grade-level volunteers. Have people for grade 1 and 2 (next year).
It was discussed to put up a signup genius now, so that parents know what the PTO volunteer opportunities are. Needs to include a good description of what things are.

MCF – Sue

May 6. Countries are working on performance rehearsals. 18 countries have tables. Have permits. Mr. Maxwell will have band do parade in like last year, and working on song in music class.

Fun run – Sue

Recap. Raised a lot of money, new record, total of $18,300. 76% participation, improved from last year which was 73%. Ms. Restivo’s class raised most % over goal, will get incentive – CS drawstring bags. Water bottles to all kids who registered. Have ~100 leftover bottles. Could give these to incoming K students.
Positive feedback from students, teachers, parents. Was nice to have as one-day event, with all classes; felt like more of an event this way, with the balloons. Was easier with weather. Could have music next year. Was a lot of fun. Could have mascot next year to cheer on kids. Adam Lipson was suggested as possible mascot candidate.

Rockin Raffle – Chelsea

Kids should get their raffle bucks in folders today, and all kids will get a flier. Online this year. No limit on tickets, and parents can purchase additional tickets if needed. Have great raffle prizes, with 71 prizes. People can start putting in tickets now. Plan to have a live drawing.

Newton SERVES – Julie

Planned for May 7, from 9-4. Indoor and outdoor projects. Have sent google form for teachers to sign up, have ~5 projects submitted thus far. Requested playground woodchips from the city – the city will send someone out to assess if they feel we need woodchips, and if so how much. Have also requested mulch, leaf bags, and trash bags. For food for volunteers, requested Wegmans gift card donation – proposal submitted, and pending. The project is registered on the city website, for people to sign up. Running in Update.

Teacher Appreciation
Had coffee bar - barrista with snacks, teachers loved it. Was $500 for 2 hours, gave teachers unlimited coffees.

5th grade committee

Many upcoming events planned. Field trip after break.
Community service project – collecting food donations. Will prepare snack bags for food pantry.
Working on party in May.
Brown principal will visit students.
Cove field day in May.
Grad is 6/20. (last day of school 6/21).
Working on tshirts. Discussed getting earlier next year, so kids can wear over the year, as they don’t wear in middle school. Could get early in year, so kids can wear at events thru the year; and get some extras for new students who join later in the year.

Election bake sale did well. Did better than first one. Was early release day so pizzas went quickly. Made $1600.

Other fundraising ideas were discussed. Could have food trucks visit on Wednesday, and we get percentage.
It was discussed that there were unequal family contributions to the 5th grade fund, some families gave a lot, and some did not.
Could try to defray family costs with more fundraising.
Can have CS night at restaurants.

Green Team – Julie

Planted garden on Sat – planted seeds for rasdishes, spinach, lettuces. Have watering schedule – students will help water, with one class helping 1 day per week. Families can sign up to water on the weekends. Harvest party planned in June.

Building plans.

The new school will be where parking lot is. Students are staying at CS during construction.

There was a brief discussion about the proposed budget cuts, which will disproportionally impact CS, with proposed classroom cut, as well as ELL aide loss, K aide loss, strings, and other losses.

Adjourned 852pm

Next meeting – May 10, location TBD