

PTA Meeting Minutes
June 7, 2016

1. Meeting called to order at 7:36 pm.
2. May minutes approved and added to the record.
3. Thank You to All Our Volunteers the Past Month:

Kathleen McDermott and **Ms. Thai** for rocking Field Day 2016. **Kathleen McDermott** for setting up Wellness Committee recess activities on June 1st.

All Carnival Committee Chairs, Teachers, Staff and Volunteers who came out to help set-up, run games, sell concessions and clean up for Friday's Carnival. And to **Carnival Chairs, Laura Kolton** and **Rachel Hirschberg Light**, for organizing and overseeing everything. **Tiesa James**, Community of Caring Liaison, for organizing and publicizing the Annual Christy Meyer Community of Caring Day at Westbrook. Guest Speaker **Linda Rubin** of the Make-A-Wish Foundation for her presentation with **Ms. Pickle** on Community of Caring Day. **Chris Dixon Barone** and **Kelly Fraser** for running another successful Trash Free Lunch Day. **Deborah Kalb** for keeping our calendars up to date all year long. **Caryn Solomon**, our lost and found fairy, for dealing with all of our kids' misplaced jackets through a very rainy season. **Erin Harcourt** for the Staff Appreciation Week events. **Amanda Crider, Erin Harcourt, and Room Parents** for coordinating the End of Year Teacher Gifts. **All Room Parents** for the End of Year Classroom Parties. **Risa Elias** for coordinating flowers on behalf of Westbrook for Ms. McNeil's breathtaking shows. **Chris Barone** and **Valerie Parker** for all their hard work with the Artist in Residencies. **Liz Brown** for keeping track of all volunteer opportunities and the thousands of hours. **Kerry Moore** for her help with Westbrook's Art Show. **Westbrook Staff** for a lovely Volunteer Breakfast on Monday. **Ami Susan Petrucelli, Grounds Chair**, and all the volunteers who will come out next Saturday with rolled up sleeves to pitch in for Spring Clean Up Day. **To all the amazing volunteers at Westbrook! Thank you!!**

4. Treasurer's Report – Susan Higgins

Presentation of Current Budget – Carnival numbers not yet final since all expenses and income (sponsor, food trucks, late May/early June online ticket sales) are not in. We anticipate

spending an additional \$8,000 in 2015–16 which would leave us with \$53,711 in reserves on July 1, 2016. This information will be needed later when we look at the possible ways this reserve money might get spent. Thank you to the PTA community for all of the feedback/input about the budget at the May 2016 PTA meeting. There are the changes from the 2016–17 budget presented at May PTA meeting:

- Science Committee gets \$2500 (instead of \$1500). All of the funds to pay for this will come from the \$2500 Microsoft donated in 2015 that was earmarked for STEM. (Shown by putting \$2500 in the revenue column for this line item.)
- We will keep teacher allocation at \$350 for returning teachers but decrease allocation for new (to school or grade) teachers to \$450 (instead of \$500). Assuming eight new teachers and only two K teachers brings total to \$12,100. The past two school years the teachers spent roughly 70% of total allocated for all teachers. Assuming this will be the case again in coming school year, we can budget \$8,712 -- but I rounded up to \$9,000 to give us a little more cushion. This way we won't have to fundraise money that doesn't get used in school year.
- Professional Development line item was moved to "Special Projects." This was decided as a way to show that we plan to fund this from reserves this year. If future PTAs decide to have it funded through Family Contribution (a more sustainable model) then move it back up to "Program Expenses."
- Family Contribution goal is \$40,415 (down from \$43,565).

A. Vote on Professional Development Options

There was a considerable amount of explanation of the Voting Options. A chart was distributed to show various budget scenarios depending on how we vote. Susan explained, "Assuming you break even on everything next year, the bottom line shows how much would be left in each scenario depending on how we vote."

Members went on to discuss several concerns before voting:

- How much cash on hand do we need to start the school year?

- What is the recommended amount that a PTA keep in reserves at the start of the school year?
- Are we obliged to spend our money?
- Do we need to have more reserves this fall because class sizes are getting smaller? (If we are getting smaller, will our fundraising be limited?)
- Did our reserves go down after Carnival?
- Do we need to reevaluate how much is spent on Carnival next year? And perhaps some of the old carnival traditions that might no longer align with our school's values?

Susan explained the options for the first vote: We will fund one of these options or none of these options. Ms. Lane presented 3 levels of professional development funding. There were several concerns discussed before the vote:

- People want to be sure it will be spent wisely.
- Is Ms. Lane is planning to come back to the table to switch the plan?
- If we going to spend 20K every year or two, shouldn't we have to have some sort of benchmark, some sort of accountability that the professional development programs are having a positive impact?
- Can we worry about sustainability of the program next year?
- Do we have actual data points? Information on staff satisfaction?
- Would some teachers be willing to come to the meeting and present why this professional development has been useful for them?
- Are there good substitutes in the classroom when teachers leave to participate in professional development activities?
- And by the way why are such a large percentage of teachers?
- When people leaving what is the transition plan?

There were explanations from Ms. Lane and Mrs. Colleen Dahlem regarding the teachers' reasons for leaving. Several teachers had babies this year and several teachers have moved and left for personal reasons. Ms. Lane explained why collaborative team planning days are very valuable times for our teachers. Colleen Dahlem echoed the sentiment that for teachers to have a halfday out of the classroom each quarter to look at the curriculum and

make sure all teachers are on the same page regarding assessments and proficiency is really valuable for Westbrook.

More questions and comments followed:

- Does the county do prof development? Ms. Lane explained that yes, there are some days over the summer that teachers will have to go to a meeting to learn about curriculum. However after that, 3–4 hours of training is hard to deliver in a staff meeting and may also only pertain to some grade levels. When it comes to differentiation for students, walk-throughs benefit teachers as they can learn from one another.
- One member spoke up in favor of funding the PD saying that Professional Development is central to our PTA's cause. Member suggested we not get bogged down on too much nickel and diming. Member will support future sustaining, as well, so that “when Ms. Lane is filling openings, she can say that we care about making you a better teacher.”
- Another member voiced interest in the longevity of the teachers, data, average length of teacher stays, etc.
- Ms. Lane and Mrs. Dahlem addressed this request, explaining that when teachers leave Westbrook, it's not that they want to. It's very expensive to live around here. As teachers begin to start families and have babies, long commutes are tough, so 4–5 years is the average longevity.
- Another member: “It's not that I don't believe in staff development, to ask for some accountability is totally reasonable.”
- Ms. Lane said she would be okay with giving a report, grant proposal and end of the year report. Since no format was previously given, that wasn't done.
- “Can we move to delay the vote? I agree accountability is great, but I also believe professional development is important. Balance on both sides.”
- “As a former PTA president, things do come up, you do need money in the reserves.”
- Could we make a motion to propose with the understanding that there would be a report that comes with it?
- “The most important piece in the execution of the design and the role of the teachers, when a leader has a very strong vision, it can be hard for other people in the room to say that it's not working out, out of respect for you. The assurance we need is from the teachers. I want to know that all the teachers feel like this is what they would pick if they had

raised the money themselves.” Ms. Lane answered that “we do collect anonymous surveys, collect interest from staff. We don't just put it out and drop it like a stone. If people are not interested in something, that's not worth it, a huge waste.”

Motion to vote.

The majority voted to fund the entirety of Ms. Lane's proposal.

C. Vote on Teacher's Lounge Options

Susan asked if there were any questions on the staff lounge and the majority was in favor of funding the project to improve the teacher's lounge.

D. Vote on Bottle Filling Stations

There were several questions and clarification made regarding this project.

- Are there problems with Montgomery County water?
- How many kids are actually carrying water bottles?
- Rebuttal -- these waters will filter out even lead. You can't reverse lead damage and we don't know what the level is and this is an old building.
- What is the installation cost?
- Ms. Lane has done some research on this. MCPS would install them if it's just a retrofit. Maintenance is only filters.
- “Let's not spend the money until we know they'll be installed and won't sit in a closet somewhere.”

Upon voting, the majority was in favor of going forwards with the new bottle filling stations.

5. Teacher Liaison Report – Since the meeting was going on so late, Ms. Dahlem agreed to skip her report. But here is the transcript of what she would have said:

Kindergarten just returned from their end of the year field trip to the zoo to culminate our study of animals' habitats and external features. We have been hard at work publishing a non-fiction piece in which we had to gather data, sort data, and write about the data. In Reading, we have been focusing on non-fiction texts and their key details. We are all so proud of the student's progress

from the beginning of the year to becoming amazing readers at the end! In Social Studies, we have been focusing on culture and what makes our families unique and different.

First Grade said a sad farewell to Mrs. Kim for the remainder of the year. They wrote their first grade memoirs, and learned about geometry and time. They have a Potomac Pizza in school field trip and their EOY party next week.

Second grade had not submitted update as of press time.

Third grade learned about quadrilaterals and perimeter and area in math. They worked on reflections of storyboards in writing. They just finished an opinion newsletter. They made models of Dams in science and got to test them out!

Fourth grade is beginning to assign leadership roles to the rising fifth graders. They are doing informational writing about a topic learned in class modeled off of the articles in reading. In science they are learning about fossils, rocks and minerals.

Fifth graders are writing opinion essays on future careers, studying family inheritance of genetic traits, living breathing and practically eating plays....because they are also studying them in reading. Pirates of Penzance begins tomorrow!

6. Principal's Report – Ms. Jennifer Lane

A question was asked to Ms. Lane by a member: Ms. Brick, beloved and experienced, why of all the three is she going to switch grades? Ms. Lane: Thank you for asking. I didn't make her go to third grade. She asked me. I'm feeling really good about our teams for next year."

Another question was posed to Ms. Lane: "Do you face challenges getting diverse teachers in gender and race? It's quite stark here." Ms. Lane explained, "It's really hard to find males in elementary school. Out of the 97 candidates for second grade, only 1 is a male. There just aren't a lot of males in Elementary School teaching, and race is something that MCPS is working on. Teachers in other parts of the county are diverse. Some has to do with teacher desire, maybe lots of teachers aren't attracted to work in a school that doesn't have a lot of diversity. Title 1 schools help pay back loans and have smaller class sizes. If our teaching force is overwhelming white and female, it takes a long time to fix. Can only be fixed with

teacher attrition.”

Another question – For example, people who have never taught 5th grade before, how will they be ready to teach the curriculum? Ms. Lane explained that people are already planning ahead. Even though they are not paid over the summer, they are already working on that.

A few parents expressed concern that we didn't do all the field trips we were supposed to do this year in our children's grade. Also “Is Westward Ho going to be safe for sure?” And, “We were really disappointed about flag pond.” Ms. Lane explained that we're not actually supposed to send kids on field trips that do not have any ties to curriculum.

Another question: Are older teachers who are more established better to hire because they'll stay with us? “All things considered, I do my darn best to bring the best teachers here,” said Ms. Lane.

Another question: Do you have a sense of which of the 4th and 5th teachers will be teaching compacted math? Reply: Yes for 4th, yes for 5th. Concerned parent: “This is a 5th grade issue. A lot of us are willing to pitch in, the resources are here, use the "dinosaur parents" to help over the summer.”

Question: Who is the team lead for 2nd? Mrs. Pattakos

Motion to vote on next year's executive board. Seconded. Majority voted yes to this slate of nominees. Dana Rice swore in the new board members.

7. Meeting Adjourned at 9:12 pm.