

Thurston Middle School General Meeting
September 29th 2015

Executive PTO Board Members in Attendance:

Allison Borchers, Principal

Kyle Grady, Vice Principal

Suzanne Becker, Co-President

Alan Jacobson, Co-President

Susan Linehan, Secretary

Apologies, unable to attend, Frank Vitiello, Treasurer

Guest Speaker - Superintendent John Antonucci

Attending with Superintendent John Antonucci

Heath Petracca, Charlie Donohue, Josepha Jowdy, Carol Lewis

Welcome - Introduction of Officers

Suzanne Becker opened the meeting by introducing the current PTO Executive Board to the parents, staff and school committee members attending the meeting. She welcomed Alan Jacobsen and Frank Vitiello to their first year on the board.

Treasurer's Report

In the absence of Frank Vitiello, Alan Jacobson presented the Treasurer's Report to the meeting. A copy of the PTO Budget was made available to the meeting and whilst it is early in the 2015-2016 school year it is anticipated that there will once again be a healthy participation in membership/payment of dues, which is the main source of income for the PTO.

He confirmed that if families wish to pay their membership dues at the upcoming Curriculum Night, October 8th, 6:30 PM start at Thurston

Middle School there will be an opportunity to do so with the PTO Board attending on the evening. Payment can be made with cash, check or credit card through Paypal.

School Directories for the membership will be sent home with students by the middle of October.

Principal's Report

Allison Borchers welcomed parents to the meeting and expressed her thanks for their continued support of the TMS PTO and school for the upcoming school year. She looks forward to seeing parents at the upcoming Curriculum Night Thursday October 8th at 6.30pm.

Vote on Proposed Amendment to TMS PTO Bylaws

Suzanne Becker addressed the meeting regarding the Board's wish to review and amend the Bylaws. There were a couple of minor amendments required to the wording of Article 5 - Meetings and Article 7 - Committees. A copy of the amendments were provided to the membership last week via email, giving the required notice of the changes. Members present were given the opportunity to review the changes and a vote was taken to approve. The motion was proposed by Patty Spink, seconded by Laura Horsfall and the changes passed unanimously.

Superintendent Antonucci - Space and Capital Needs Study Update

John Antonucci thanked the Board for the opportunity to speak with the meeting to give an update in person and answer any questions on the progress of the Space and Capital Needs Study. He explained that this is an ongoing process which began during 2014-2015 School Committee meetings when the need to be proactive and assess the district's current and future buildings requirements were discussed. It was agreed and voted upon at School Committee Meeting in 2014 that a firm, SMMA, should be hired by the school district administration to do a complete and extensive Space and Capital Needs review and present their findings for consideration.

In April 2015 the full report was presented by SMMA to the School Committee during a special retreat meeting. The report included six options for making changes at the elementary school level which are under ongoing review by the School Committee.

As part of this review process the Superintendent has made the necessary formal application to the State to request a meeting to discuss funding that might be available to the town from them. He is awaiting a response to this request and expects that this may take some time for a date for this meeting to be formalised.

As always further progress and updates will be discussed at upcoming school committee meetings, the minutes of which are published on the District webpage.

John Antonucci also confirmed that the report includes a review and recommendations for the Thurston Middle School building and operations for those parents who would like to read these. John Antonucci confirmed that at this time no immediate changes are being implemented at the Middle School level.

The full report, which is extensive at 365 pages, along with the Superintendents summary of the main facts can be found on the District's web site through the link below:

<http://www.westwood.k12.ma.us/district/school-committee/space-and-capital-needs-study.cfm>

PTO Committee Reports

Apparel Fundraiser

Suzanne Becker gave an update on behalf of Joanne Ouellette, the chair of the Apparel committee who was unable to attend.

Joanne confirms she has a great range of clothing prepared to present to the members at curriculum night. PTO volunteers will be available on the

night to answer your questions and take orders. The Board is also looking into the option of taking credit cards for payment but please bring along your checkbooks/cash along as a back up. Joanne will also arrange with Allison to give a presentation to the students at TMS as well so that they can let you know their favorites.

This fundraiser is always popular with parents and students and a great opportunity to get ahead on your Holiday shopping!

Directory

Suzanne Becker gave an update on behalf of committee chair John Cummings and confirmed that School Directories for the membership will be sent home with students by the middle of October as soon as they are printed.

Gardening

Suzanne Becker gave an update on behalf of committee chair Stephen Botelho and expressed her thanks to him and Bindu Thomas for their work this week on sprucing up the school's appearance. Please take a moment in your busy day during drop off and pick up to admire the beautiful fall flowers surrounding the school signs on High Street and Nahatan Street, along with those at the front entrance of the building. Planning ahead for spring the committee also took the time to plant bulbs around the school grounds, so watch for those early next year.

Hospitality

Patty Spink gave an update on the events that Hospitality committee will be hosting with volunteers during the school year to show the parents appreciation and support to the staff. The three main events during the year that the PTO provide meals for are:

Curriculum Night, October 8th.

Parent Teacher Conferences Evening in November

Teacher Appreciation week in the spring.

The first event is Thursday October 8th for Curriculum night. Patty and co-chair Peggy Zeuthen will email parents and coordinate with Allison to provide meals for the staff who will be working an extended day to attend this event.

Scavenger Hunt

Elyse Rast gave her report on the first and very successful TMS Scavenger Hunt.

The event was well attended on a hot day by teams from 6th and 7th grade who had a blast exploring the school and discovering many new facts about their school and teachers during their quest to take their team selfies and complete the hunt. Kendra Lassen, coordinated with local businesses to provide raffle prizes for the participants, who collected raffle tickets during the hunt for a prize drawing at the end.

It was agreed that this event should be on the calendar next year, although Elyse would recommend some changes after the experiences of this year's committee and volunteers at event.

It was felt that this event might be better suited as a 6th grade event only, being a great ice breaker for them at the beginning of the school year to get to know the school in a fun and informal setting. This would help reduce the numbers of students participating and any possible concerns about safety during the excitement of the hunt for clues around the school.

As well as providing interesting facts about themselves some teachers have expressed an interest in participating in person and it was felt this would be a great addition to the event.

The need to provide drinks and snacks was raised due to some issues in managing the fair distribution of these to the participants, some of whom took longer to complete the hunt than others. This will be reviewed next year with a view to dropping this or trying to get more adult volunteers to manage this portion of the event.

A general discussion by members as to whether the PTO should consider charging a fee for teams to help cover expenses/generate a fundraising opportunity, or alternatively as an opportunity to request donations for the

food bank. Some people also expressed concerns that this might discourage participation and that it was nice to have an event that was free at a time of year when parents are writing many checks for school oriented items. Opinions of the parents present at the meeting were varied and Patty made a note of these for consideration during next year's planning. Suzanne Becker gave some insight to the members present into the creation of this new Scavenger Hunt event, which replaces the discontinued Annual Thurston Fun Run PTO event that had "run its course". This previous PTO organised event, whilst initiated as a fundraising event became more of a break even situation over the years, with minimal to no participation of Thurston students. Parents who had volunteered to be on the Fun Run Committee for 2015 agreed to brainstorm to come up with a new event and the Scavenger Hunt was born!

Website

Catherine Kontogiannis gave an update on the PTO options for including their information after district wide changes to the town's web site. Catherine has reached out to new parent volunteers in order that they can meet and discuss the best way forward for optimising PTO information on or linked to the new web site.

8th Grade Semi-Formal

Committee still in the formation stages. Any interested parents should let the PTO Board know via email or sign up sheets at the upcoming Curriculum Night.

Exploring 501(c)3 Designation for Thurston PTO

The Board has been discussing the PTO registering and becoming a 501(c)3 and requested any comments or feedback from the members present on their opinions/experience. It is anticipated that such a

designation would make the PTO more attractive for larger donations from both Corporate and personal sponsors. Members present were not confident that larger corporate sponsors would view this designation as an advantage as they tend to expense this type of donation as a marketing/Advertising expense. General opinion at the meeting was that it would be a positive move for the PTO and the Board will continue with the registration process.

Meeting was adjourned approx. 9.30am

PTO Contact Information

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