Newton PTO Council Minutes
5/7/2013

# Attendees:

## Executive Board

* Co-President - Frieda Dweck
* Co-President - Theresa Fitzpatrick
* Co-President - Rhanna Kidwell
* Secretary - Alicia Bowman
* METCO - Bree Lucas
* Political Action/Education - Marcia Tabenken

## PTO Presidents by School

* Burr - Ted Vahey
* Cabot - Jen Abbott
* Countryside - Gena Hooper
* Franklin - Carolyn Craven
* Peirce - Cynthia Willen
* Preschool - Alison Lobron
* Underwood - Karen Manning
* Ward - Alison Best
* Day - Ursula Steele
* Oak Hill - Jessica Freier
* Newton North - Sarah Schaette
* Newton South - Betsy Blagdon

## Other Attendees:

* Superintendent, NPS - David Fleishman
* School Committee - Geoff Epstein
* School Committee -Diana Fisher Gomberg
* School Committee - Angela Pitter
* State Legislature - Representative Kay Kahn
* State Legislature - Representative Ruth Balser
* State Legislature - Senator Cynthia Creem
* Senator Creem's Office - Lisa Sears

# Next Meeting:

Wednesday June 12th, 2013 9:00 am (celebration + vote on next year’s budget) at home of Theresa Fitzpatrick. 1935 Beacon St. Waban. ALL are invited (incoming PTO presidents, as well as out-going).

# Admin

Budget Changes: The PTOC Executive Board voted to reduce annual PTO dues from $170 to $125 and to eliminate dues for the preschool.

Safe Food Handling Course:  The Newton Department of Health and Human Services offers a free safe food handling course. The PTOC will arrange a date in the fall. It is a good idea to have at least one trained member of the PTO leadership or other designated parent to ensure safe food handling at PTO events.

### Mayor’s Prayer Breakfast:

The Mayor's Prayer Breakfast is Wednesday, May 29 at 7:15am at McElroy Commons Boston College. Elizabeth Warren is the Guest Speaker. The PTO Council has purchased a table. If you are interested in going, please contact Theresa Fitzpatrick to see if there are still available seats.

Open Positions on Board:  Secretary and Treasurer and other positions are open. Contact Frieda Dweck for more information.

# Update from Superintendent

### School Security:

All the elementary and middle school front doors will have cameras and front door buzzers installed. We were originally going to do all the schools this year. However, we have decided that we will pilot this at a few schools first.

The way it will work is that the camera will send a picture to the computer of the school secretary who will need to approve the entry. This will mean that secretaries will need to have back up for when they are away from their desk. It also means there is likely to be a wait for parents or visitors coming into the school, especially in the initial phase.

It is difficult to roll out a major change like this at the end of the year and the exact process may need to be modified.

### Question:

*What will it cost?* $565,000

# State Legislators

## Senator Creem

* Has represented Newton, Brookline and Wellesley in legislature for 12 years
* Former alderman in Newton and a past member of the Mass. Governor’s Council
* Chair, Senate Committee on Post Audit and Oversight
* Member of Joint Committee of Elder Affairs
* Practices family law

The usual topic for PTO Council meetings with the State Legislators is money – specifically how much money is Newton getting for education - Chapter 70, METCO, Circuit Breaker. The tricky part is the budget process is still underway. The Senate Budget proposal will be released on May 15th and will be voted on before Memorial Day. House budget and Governor’s Budget have already been released. The conference committee then works out the differences and sends to the Governor for approval. Governor either approves or vetos. To overturn a veto requires a 2/3 vote by the legislators. At this point, we can’t commit to what funding will happen. There are always differences and this leaves bargaining room.

### Legislative Priorities

1. Lower the threshold for when the circuit breaker funds kick in. Currently if a community spends more than 4 times the average student cost on special education students, the state will reimburse the community up to 70% of additional cost. This should be closer to 2-3 times the cost as some communities like Newton have a high level of special education students and costs. Note: The Governor cut circuit breaker money during low revenue period of FY13.
2. Require insurance companies to cover medically necessary costs for students on IEP such as nurses that accompany some students. These costs are currently part of the school budget.
3. Continue to support METCO.
4. New oversight committee
5. Gun control bill. I was more hopeful in the beginning. We have the support of police departments who feel controls are insufficient or have loop holes such as a resident who is denied a permit for a hand gun can still buy a shotgun as these do not require a permit.

## Representative Kay Kahn

* Represented Newton since 1995
* Founder of the legislative Mental Health Caucus and co-founded the Newton Cultural Alliance
* House Chair of the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities.
* Registered nurse

### Fiscal Year 14 Budget

The Governor’s bill looks very good for education and transportation but relies on new taxes of nearly $2 billion. Newton legislators supportive but 160 communities across have different priorities and are not up for the increased taxes. Final house budget is far less than the Governor's proposed budget because the Governor's proposed budget relies on spending new taxes that have not yet been approved by the legislature.

The recommendation from the House Ways and Means committee was a reduction in METCO spending. The final House Budget is +$500K more for METCO than FY13.

House recommendation for Chapter 70 is $114 million increase over FY13 which equates to approximately $25 per pupil more than FY13.

Circuit Breaker: $8.1 million increase statewide

### Other Legislative Priorities

1. Segregate children who are 17 who are sentenced to jail from the main adult population. Currently children under 17 who are convicted are sent to juvenile detention. Children who are 17+ go to adult system often relatively minor incidents. I would like to see the minimum age for adult prison to be least 18. Also by a federal ruling, mandating children under 18 be segregated from the main adult population.
2. Support homeless teenage children (sometimes LGBT) with housing, social support and ensure they stay in school Establish the unaccompanied youth commission. Resolving the social issues saves money in the long run for education and other community costs.
3. Increase in STEM funding Would like it to be STEAM with the A to include art.
4. Regional School transportation as transportation costs are a major factor in many communities and used to be state reimbursed.

## Representative Ruth Balser

* Serving her 8th term in the House
* A former alderman and founding member of the Newton Child Care Commission
* Member of Joint Committees on Elder Affairs, Health Care Financing; Mental Health and Substance Abuse; and Public Health
* A clinical psychologist

### Fiscal Year 14 Budget

Governor’s budget had high revenue numbers. Not sufficient political support for that much increase in funding. The House supported transportation improvements. Governor changed how funding is allocated to communities for transportation giving more money for regional transportation.

Help to fund the commitment of 17.5% of foundation costs (currently less than 14%) I worked to amend the budget to increase chapter 70 money. Newton and Brookline received more because of rising enrollment $612 K. Local aid increased over FY13

Comment from the Superintendent: *Cities and towns need to create their own school budgets prior to state budget being finalized. It is tricky to figure out how much funding the district will get. Sometimes they are left scrambling to fill gaps or make cuts.*

Question: *What will happen with the Senate version of the budget?* There are 40 senators. Some were not interested in increasing taxes and no push to increase education funding. Governor’s plan for increased income tax, snack tax, these require legislative approval. I have a feeling Senate will not be overly negative to education. We will all know on May 15th.

## Representative John Lawn

* Has served in the legislature since May 2011
* A former member of the Watertown Town Counsel
* Vice Chair, Joint Committee on Public Service
* Member of the Joint Committees on Financial Services; and Housing
* Real Estate broker/owner

Representative Lawn was unable to attend the meeting.