

**PTO Council Meeting  
October 8, 2013  
Newton North High School  
MINUTES**

**Attendees:**

Dr. David Fleishman, Superintendent

**Executive Board**

Jennifer Abbott, Co-president

Frieda Dweck, Co-president

Theresa Fitzpatrick, Co-president

Laura Holt, Health & Safety

Bree Lucas, METCO

Marcia Tabenken, Political Action

Caroline Wilson, Website Manager

**PTO Presidents by School**

Natali Atri, Angier

Anabel Cable, Angier

Jason Wong, Burr

Erin Edwards, Cabot

Gena Hooper, Countryside

Julie Pinto, Franklin

John Oliver, Horace Mann

Sarah Housman, Mason-Rice

Kim Thurmond, Mason-Rice

Doreen Rachal, Memorial-Spaulding

Monica Yancey, Memorial-Spaulding

Hagit Abraham, NECP

Rachel Conn, Pierce

Karen Manning, Underwood

Alison Best, Ward

Christina Hardway, Williams

Helen Haley, Zervas

Julie Bourgoin, Bigelow

Sally Brickell, NNHS

Betsy Blagdon, NSHS

**Other Attendees**

Jo Gourdeau, NPD

Alicia Bowman, Pedestrian Commission

Dori Zaleznick, Health & Human Services

Janice Golden, Wellcoin

Glen Lafelle, Wellcoin

**Next Meeting Dates**

Tuesday, December 3, 2013

Tuesday, February 4, 2014

**Helpful Links on PTO Council Website for Information Shared at Meeting**

For information on bike safety and pedestrian safety, go to:

<http://newtonptocouncil.org/for-parents/>,

For information on Wellcoin, go to:

<http://www.wellcoin.com/>

For information on PTO's Political Involvement in Campaigns, go to:

<http://newtonptocouncil.org/for-ptos/ptos-and-political-involvement/>

For Bake Sale Guidelines, go to:

<http://newtonptocouncil.org/for-ptos/newton-food-service-policy/>

## Superintendent's Update

Dr. Fleishman thanked members for taking on PTO leadership roles and noted that work of PTOs and the School Department involve collaboration, creativity and conflict.

*Opening Weeks*- Opening of school went smoothly, although last week was a bit tough due to suicide of Newton North student. Past several days they have been focusing on supporting students at the High School. Now turning to supporting the community. Riverside Trauma Center (Larry Berkowitz) will be available at community forum to discuss the tragic event.

*Facilities* – This past year was a big year in terms of facilities improvements. Nothing had been done for 25 years prior to this, so a lot of work was needed. Additional classrooms were added at Bowen, Burr, Horace Mann, Mason-Rice, Bigelow and Day. Work on the new Angier School has been proceeding smoothly. Carr school renovation is on schedule, and Angier students should be in that building by September 2014. Anticipate that new Angier building will be completed in 18 months. A new 10 year long range plan is being developed, and should be presented to the School Committee at its October 15 meeting.

**Question:** What about plans for Cabot School?

**Answer:** Beginning the MSBA process for Cabot. Next meeting with MSBA should happen in November or December, and will have a better sense of the timing for Cabot then. Starting to think about Zervas, as well.

*Curriculum and Technology* - At the middle school level, teachers have more access to technology. High Schools are in relatively good shape. Elementary schools need improvement.

*Elementary School Start Time* – Because of the way the state counts instructional hours, the published start time for elementary schools was changed to 8:25 am. Nothing else has changed. Teachers are already required to be in classrooms at 8:20 am. Students will still be marked late at 8:35 am. Communication on that will be forthcoming.

**Question:** What about the 5 minute turnaround time for dropping off school? Will doors be opened earlier to allow kids more time to get in the building?

**Answer:** No. Teachers need the time in the morning for set-up and preparation. So coverage for any time earlier than 8:20 am is a challenge.

*Security* – New security system in place. Still some kinks in system, but they are being worked out. Started implementing the new security system with pilot schools last spring. Rolled out in all K-8 schools this year. It is a cultural shift as much as anything. New system has been hardest on secretaries. Faculty and staff have transitioned smoothly and effectively to the wearing of ID's. There is definitely a sense of loss, though, in that Newton used to be an open school system and now it is not.

**Question:** What about voting and elections?

**Answer:** Though we might like to move out elections from schools, there is limited space for polling places. Instead, working on limiting the entrances and managing movement in school.

**Question:** What about parties in schools? How do we manage doors? Any policy?

**Answer:** Talk to your principal and try to be reasonable.

***PTO Council requested that schools consider how, in programing their usual PTO activities, they are meeting the challenges that the new security system poses, and to come prepared to talk about their creative solutions to those challenges at the next PTO Council meeting.***

***Communications*** – Megan Smallidge, former Communications director, has moved to another department to help with website development. ***Melanie Graham*** is currently the contact person for communications.

***Community Engagement*** – Based on the success of last year’s visits to schools to talk about the override, this year will continue engaging the community at a school by school level by holding meetings in every school between November and March. Meetings will probably be scheduled at drop off time. Also creating a new “book group” for parents. First book to be discussed is ***Reign of Error***, by Diane Ravitch. Time of book group will be forthcoming.

**Question:** Will meetings be information dissemination or conversation?

**Answer:** Prefers listening. Discussion will vary based on needs of the school (e.g. principal searches, elementary writing program, what will it be like when the students move to Carr). There may talk about upcoming redistricting because it will be coming soon, based on increased enrollment.

**Bike Safety** (Officer Jo Gourdeau).

***Elementary Bike Safety Program*** - Currently, 12 out of 15 elementary schools have a bike safety training program for 4<sup>th</sup> and/or 5<sup>th</sup> graders. Would like all schools to be involved. Program involves (i) teaching bike riding skills, (ii) checking the safety of bicycles, (iii) checking helmets, and (iv) practicing rules of the road. The program is run by the police department with the help of parent volunteers, and often the assistance of the PE teacher. Usually done during PE period. They ask children to bring bikes, but they also have a bike share program. They have them ride for a half an hour in the school and half an hour on the roads. Kids must know how to ride a bike to go on the road.

Some helpful links:<http://www.safekids.org/bike> , <https://sites.google.com/site/newtonbptf/home>, [http://www.walkbiketoschool.org/sites/default/files/Kids\\_Bike\\_Safety\\_Tips.pdf](http://www.walkbiketoschool.org/sites/default/files/Kids_Bike_Safety_Tips.pdf)

***Middle School Bike Safety Program***. More like a pre-driver’s ed program. Teaches kids rules of the road (Mass Bike comes in and talks about rules of the road), and encourages helmet use (it is the law for everyone under the age of 17 to wear a helmet)

**Question:** Can parents participate in the safe bike programs?

**Answer:** Bike Newton runs programs to encourage bike riding and to facilitate bike-road safety. <http://bikenewton.org/>

***Helmet Safety*** – As part of bike safety program, Officer Jo teaches about helmet safety and provides helmets to kids who either don’t have helmets or whose helmets do not meet safety

guidelines. Helmets generally have a 5 year expiration date – components deteriorate, if it has been in a crash it is no longer safe for usage. Must fit snugly.

***PTO Council would like to help support the bike safety program with a grant to Officer Jo to be used for the purchase of helmets that can be distributed as needed.***

***Question:*** How much should we consider donating for the safe helmet program.

***Answer:*** About 12-20 helmets at \$10 (a couple of hundred dollars).

***The PTO will put together a proposal to fund this request and present at the next PTO Council meeting.***

## **Wellcoin** (Dori Zaleznik and Glen Lafelle)

The Wellcoin Program promotes healthy choices through positive reinforcement. Wellcoins are given when healthy choices are reported and can be exchanged for goods from local businesses. You can bank Wellcoins or use them immediately.

Newton has signed up to be the first model city for the program. Newton residents have already earned over a half a million coins for preparing a healthy meal, taking a bike ride, or taking a hike. 24 local businesses in the area have already partnered with Wellcoin to allow you to redeem your points (eg. Whole Foods, Pink Berry, Legal Seafoods, Johnny’s Luncheonette).

Currently, the Wellcoin program is geared only towards adults, However, Wellcoin is rolling out a program for children around November 1, and is asking for support to help bring this message to children in the area. Points are earned by the adults for doing healthy activities with their children, like taking them to soccer practice, preparing a healthy meal together, or taking them to a doctor. Then the coins get transferred over to the children.

Newton is also part of Michelle Obama’s “Let’s Move” program. There is thought that the Wellcoin program can be linked with the Let’s Move program to encourage healthier behaviors in kids.

Sign up for Wellcoin is on the Wellcoin website at <http://www.wellcoin.com/>, and also on the home page of the City’s website (last menu option on left side) at <http://www.newtonma.gov/>.

**Question:** Will you work with school staff to help promote healthy behaviors (e.g. the health teachers in middle schools)?

**Answer:** Wellcoin would be very open to those partnerships.

## **Pedestrian Safety** (Alicia Bowman)

***Safe-Routes-to-School.*** The Safe Routes to School program was created to ensure kids can walk more safely to school. Some of their accomplishments include: passage of the sidewalk snow clearing ordinance, better markings of crosswalks, greater participation in International Walk to School events.

### *Pedestrian Task Force*

(a) Encouraging Walking. City promotes walking events (and biking events) like hikes through the Newton aqueducts, and recent Tour de Newton bike event.

(b) Pedestrian Issues. City has set up system to handle pedestrian issues. People are encouraged to report sidewalk problems by using the 311 notification system. Several issues that parents walking children to school might identify with are broken sidewalks, bushes obscuring the sidewalk. DWP will take care of these issues.

(b) Pedestrian Master Plan. The city is currently developing a 10 year master plan dealing with wider pedestrian issues in the city. All Newton villages as well as other constituents in the area are encouraged to participate in putting together this plan.

**Question:** Preschool crosswalk safety?

**Answer:** There is a new light. When it is solid red, then the driver must stop. There are also other light patterns.

**Question:** What about traffic around the new Carr School?

**Answer:** The Carr school had a pedestrian plan, and it may need to evolve in the future as the reality of the congestion becomes apparent.

**Question:** Limited sidewalks in some neighborhoods?

**Answer:** The sidewalks will need to be prioritized, and right now it is prioritized around fixing sidewalks as the road projects are being implemented.

***The PTO Council encourages each PTO to designate a person to be their Safe Routes to School representative who can attend meetings of the Safe Routes to School committee and participate in any city dialogues on pedestrian safety.***

### **Election Day Update** (Marcia Tabenken)

Not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organizations (which all Newton PTOs are) CANNOT endorse or actively support a candidate or distribute materials of any candidate. If you have an informational meeting with one candidate, then you need to give the other candidate equal time and opportunity.

As an individual, you can endorse a candidate BUT DO NOT USE YOUR PTO PRESIDENT title in the endorsement or let the perception be that you are endorsing on behalf of the PTO.

*Election Day Bake sales*—Please comply with health department guidelines.

### **Administrative**

- PTO Council Secretary Still Needed.
- Equity: The Annual Per Pupil Equity Rate for this year is \$189.62. PTO Council is interested in **updating the equity policy. If you have any issues or ideas about this or if you want to be involved in the conversation, then let the PTO Council co-presidents know.**