

**Newton PTO Council**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**Tuesday, October 9, 2018 @ 7:30pm**  
**Newton Ed Center, Room 210**

**Attendees**

Karen Hite (PTOC Co-Chair), Emily Prenner (PTOC Co-Chair), Kristin Bedard (Lincoln-Eliot), Liz Hiser (PTOC Secretary), Karen Manning (*Ex Officio*), Jennifer Bekarian (Peirce), Andrea Steenstrup (*Ex Officio*), Shana Maldonado (Angier), Claudia Rossi (Franklin), Maura Morse (Franklin), Joann Calcagno-Tahn (Williams), Michelle Spitzkoff (Memorial-Spaulding), Erika Downey (Memorial-Spaulding), Bill Kenneally (Ward), Nicky Chapman (Cabot), Leslie Ziarko Valera (Mason-Rice), Adam Howes (Countryside), Lisa DePalma (PTOC SEPAC Liaison), Jenn Martin (Zervas), Maggie Schmidt (Zervas), Caroline Wilson (PTOC Communications Chair), Michelle Tsay (Bowen), Jess Brooks (Bowen), Lindsay Pike (PTOC Treasurer), Tamar Chamassian (Oak Hill), Katie Scott (NECP), Sally Brickell (NNHS), Jen Abbott (PTOC Equity Co-Chair), Maureen Oates (PTOC Elementary Rep), Zlatena Simeonova (Ward), Will Adams (Mason-Rice), Jas Rai (Mason-Rice), Teri Ginsburg (Brown/PTOC SEL Rep)

**Introductions**

Emily Prenner called meeting to order at 7:30pm.

Discussed a situation where NPS and at least one related 501 (c) 3 group are being asked by a private citizen to provide financial and governance information – some of it private and confidential. PTOs can direct any requests from the public to the Massachusetts Attorney General's website, where Form PC & 990s are posted, and to their individual PTO websites if applicable. If you need advice about this or any other related issues, please contact the PTOC Co-Presidents.

**Superintendent's Remarks**

*David Fleishman*

Thanks for being PTO leaders!

Highlights of the academic initiatives in NPS this year:

- New math curriculum introduced to remaining elementary grades (last year Grades 3,4)
- New middle school math curriculum
- Middle school executive function program being piloted @ 1 school
- 10<sup>th</sup> grade Chrome books (1 student: 1 device) pilot @ both high schools
- Parent engagement:
  - Superintendent's Annual Forum. This year's topic is Vaping/ECigarettes. Date TDB.
  - Forum on Race & Inclusion. December 1<sup>st</sup> 1-4pm @ NNHS. Workshop-based, looking into offering childcare, RSVP will be requested.
  - These initiatives are intended to reinforce at home the learning occurring at school

**School Committee Update - A look at the year ahead**

*Ruth Goldman, Chair of Newton School Committee (SC)*

All are welcome at SC meetings – Mondays (check SC calendar for dates, not every Monday) 7pm in Room 210 of the Ed Center. Agendas are online under the School Committee tab of the NPS website:

<https://www.newton.k12.ma.us/domain/68>

Other ways for parents & community members to get information:

- SC email newsletter (sign up online, see above) with a brief recap of each meeting, including links to relevant reports & documents, sent afterwards.
- Periodic Sunday evening Facebook Live chats

SC = Board of Directors for the district: oversee budget, hire CEO, review/oversee policies, participate in collective bargaining, help NPS with new initiatives.

Key projects this year:

- **Full Day Kindergarten**
  - Target 2019 implementation.
  - Add classroom aide to each classroom.
  - \$1M allocation (recurring) from City.
  - In the expanded time, teachers will integrate SEL and play time – research and testimony on the efficacy of using of play as a vehicle for learning in K.
- **Later High School Start Time**
  - Full report due in December.
  - Cost of busing, which continues to increase, will be a major factor in determining how/whether Newton could make an earlier high school start time happen.
  - HSST Working Group must now focus on examining a cost-neutral model, which means one other level (elementary or middle school) will have to change its start time.
- **New Buildings**
  - 150 Jackson Rd (former Rashi School): working group looking at feasibility of housing an elementary school there. Currently houses the preschool, not ideal to house PreK and Elementary on the same site, to determine which one is best there.
  - Horace-Mann will move permanently to Nevada Street (current Carr School building) 2019-20 school year.
  - Decision on use for current Horace-Mann building.
  - Next big renovation project on the schedule: Countryside -> Franklin -> Ward (by the end of 2020s)

Other issues the School Committee hears about from parents:

- Food service/quality. FYI, vendor contract is up – must go out to bid every 3 years, this will happen in December 2018.
- Overcrowding of buses. Ridership is up this fall, unexpectedly. School transportation department has added buses on some routes.

#### **Q&A**

*Superintendent Fleishman & SC Chair Goldman*

**Q:** Full Day K will impact elementary after school programs and their ability to hire (difficult if they only need most staff from 3-6pm).

**A:** Aware of this issue, spent last 3 years in conversation with the after school programs to keep open communication. This is probably the biggest downside to Full Day K.

**Q:** Where does Lincoln-Eliot fall on the school building construction schedule?

**A:** 4 years from now most likely L-E would move into 150 Jackson Road. In that case, L-E would co-habit with NECP temporarily, until the current Horace-Mann building is renovated to house PreK. Meantime the existing L-E building is being upgraded (e.g., new boiler).

**Q:** HSST: Could the start time go later than 8:30am?

**A:** Schedules may not be able to accommodate much later start if we want to avoid much later end time. Goal has been to push as close to 8:30pm for the start.

**Q:** HSST: Can we make more use of public buses? Has there been collaboration?

**A:** 52 MBTA Bus (Parker Street - Wheeler Road) already used by NPS students. Unsure MBTA could offer more, felt lucky that route is still running.

**Q:** HSST: Have we considered pulling together schools in DCL (NSHS) and Bay State League (NNHS) in a later start time consortium, like the Middlesex League, to agree to work towards common (later) end times so athletics might not be impacted by an earlier start?

**A:** DCL is discussing this.

**Q:** HSST & change in the high school schedules: What are scenarios?

**A:** The start time won't change without schedule change. So much good work on the scheduling has been done, it's been 20 years since we looked at the schedule. Feedback from faculty is that current schedule should be improved no matter what.

**Q:** At the last SC meeting, Mayor Fuller discussed the City's allocation to NPS: 3.4% increase this year, then 3.25% increase thereafter. That funding won't allow us to maintain current programming (aka maintenance of effort). What will the effect of that change in allocation be on the NPS budget?

**A (DF):** 3.5% increase was always tight, with the exception of the several years after the override. Would be a challenge but not impossible to have maintenance of effort. Enrollment is not increasing, but fixed costs remain. Transportation costs are one of the biggest sources of pressure: \$100K per bus/year & rising. 3.25% will be very challenging to get maintenance of effort and there would be no money for anything new.

**A (RG):** Lower enrollment will definitely help. Bus costs are a big issue – they are increasing 7-8% annually. 3.4% increase obviously won't cover that...

### **Equity Update/Overview**

*Jen Abbott & Emily Prenner*

Steve Rattendi, the new interim Director of IT for NPS, has joined the Equity Working Group.

Jen & Christine Dutt will schedule info sessions for PTOs—separate sessions for elementary & secondary schools--to increase comfort with the equity guidelines going into effect next school year. Goal is that all schools know about the changes and understand the impact on PTO budgeting and planning. It's also important to understand new procedures for permissions on spending in certain categories.

All Principals will receive a communication about the changes and reporting requirements – content tailored to each level regarding the impacts.

Emily urges every school to send at least one person to these trainings.

Currently reviewing applications from parents/PTO leaders to sit on the Working Group, will let all applicants know by Monday 10/15.

**Q:** The new cap on technology, how should we handle past mixed message from the district (i.e, cap is in place but being told “you need x” over and above what the PTO is able to spend)?

**A:** Working Group knows \$15/student cap won't cover 100% of technology needs in each school, but it does keep the differential between schools in check. Working Group can get creative about solutions, and a reminder that these guidelines are a 2-year pilot. The cap is a healthy first step so the district is being thoughtful about what tech is actually needed in the classroom

### **Odds and Ends**

*Emily Prenner*

Proposal to spend PTOC surplus on community speaker event(s).

- Lindsay Pike reports \$5200 in bank.
- Board suggested funding speakers on education/parenting topics, either co-funding with another group or by ourselves. This parent education would touch all schools.
- David Fleishman would welcome PTOC as a named co-sponsor do defray some cost of the Principal's Forum (see above).
- Comments from the group were positive re: this proposal. Suggestions in addition to the Principal's Forum included:
  - Fund a topic that is more applicable to elementary parents next time or in addition;
  - Race-related speaker.
  - Does FORJ have a need for speaker funding?

- Questions about what PTOC's annual expenses and expected revenues are. Lindsay reviewed them. In addition to administrative expenses, PTOC contributes to SEPAC Educator Awards, Table at Mayor's Prayer Breakfast (benefits the Harmony Foundation), METCO scholarship fund.
- **Q:** Do we contribute to the CAPP and UOD organizations?
- **A:** PTOC does not contribute, these programs are not used by all schools, not universal enough for us to consider.
- Teri Ginsburg will manage a committee to determine any other speaker collaborations/event, email forthcoming.
- Emily moved to allocate up to \$3,000 speakers & programming this academic year, with the leadership of our speakers subcommittee. Katie Scott seconded. All in favor. Motion passed.

Blue Zone video produced by Mason-Rice (see Maureen Oates's email).

- Maureen is available to consult if schools would like advice on how to produce one tailored to their location/Blue Zone.
- **Q:** Should we resurrect a PTOC Blue Zone Committee?
- **A:** Maureen has heard from several schools and will be sending a template for making a video, may have a small meeting if there is critical mass. No need for formal committee at this time.
- **Q:** Has the video had an effect on behavior so far at M-R?
- **A:** Focusing on setting expectations. Video followed by canvassing (PTO members in reflective vests handing out one-sheet reminders of Blue Zone rules). Most parents/caregivers are grateful for the education, 1% will never follow. K parents especially have appreciated the information.

Information-Sharing

- Emily reminded the group that we have the ability to share information via our shared email list.
- Each PTOC member has the ability to send messages with questions to all PTOC members, or just to elementary or secondary PTOs, via our PTOC email list.
- Everyone here is a resource.
- PTOC email list: Please update Treasurer info! Most Co-Presidents are current as of yesterday.

### **New Business**

Haven't had time on the agenda recently to do breakout groups to share information on topics like how to get volunteers, fundraising, how to foster new leadership, etc... We are considering putting breakout sessions on an upcoming agenda to brainstorm and then share information. This could lead to creation of subcommittees on certain topics if there is interest.

Teri Ginsburg mentioned possibility of bringing back the occasional smaller group meet-ups outside of PTOC full meetings to share info.

Idea for a topic: how to talk about the new equity guidelines and the Working Group with parents and PTO Boards. We will need advice and to share best practices for communicating these changes.

Meeting adjourned 9pm.