

**Newton PTO Council Meeting Minutes**  
**Tuesday, February 5, 2019 @ 7:30pm**  
**Newton Ed Center, Room 210**

**Attendees**

Christine Dutt (PTOC Co-President), Karen Hite (PTOC Co-President), Will Adams (Mason-Rice), Maureen Oates (PTOC Elementary Rep), Teri Ginsburg (Brown + PTOC Soc-Emotional Wellness Rep), Colleen Nolan (Angier), Maura Morse (Franklin), Cristal Balis (Burr), Michelle Spitzkoff (Memorial Spaulding), Erika Downey (Memorial Spaulding), Lauren McMinn (L-E PTO member), Bill Kenneally (Ward), Zlatena Simeonova (Ward PTO Treasurer), Jenn Martin (Zervas), Maggie Schmidt (Zervas), Lisa DePalma (SEPA Liaison), Liz Hiser (PTOC Secretary), Lisa Weinman (Bowen), John Fox (Bowen PTO Treasurer), Andrea Steenstrup (Equity Working Group), Sally Brickell (NNHS), Caroline Wilson (PTOC Communications), Nicky Chapman (Cabot), Michele Morris (Cabot), Katie Scott (NECP)

Christine Dutt called the meeting to order at 7:33pm. Attendees introduced themselves.

**Approval of Minutes**

John Fox moved to approve the minutes from the December 4, 2018 PTO Council meeting, with 2 corrections noted. Katie Scott seconded. All approved

**Equity Update**

*Christine Dutt*

Community input happening now:

- o Focus groups – 2 were this morning; 2 on Thursday.
- o Treasurer's survey – will go out soon
- o PTO Board member survey – in process – waiting for focus group results to inform survey questions
- o After all of the above, will be able to survey all NPS families

Equity Committee gave scheduled update to the School Committee (SC) in January. Their written report is on the School Committee's website in meeting materials. At that meeting the SC a) determined that the Working Group should have more time to make a recommendation regarding central funds (aka pooled funds); b) extended the WG final recommendation deadline, likely into the next school year.

Equity Committee continues school visits: L-E, Williams, Ward, M-R, Peirce last few weeks. Burr & Angier next week. Happy to schedule other schools, contact Christine or Jen Abbott. The following SC members have also attended these meetings: K. Shields (member of Equity Committee & Working Group), R. Goldman, M. Miller, D. Fisher-Gomberg.

Equity Committee continues to meet regularly. Latest topic: giving feedback on annual IT letter to Principals to make it more clear what school's inventory is and how old. EC will recommend to SC that Technology cap of \$15 per student can roll over from year to year.

EC will solicit input from PTOs on all aspects of the Equity Guidelines in practice as 2-year pilot goes along.

**Q:** IT cap can be rolled over. Can PTOs also roll over the general equity cap?

**A:** No. But will bring up again to EC.

**Comment:** IT inventory really needs to be more specific. What is 5 years old = good info, but should also delineate what is about to be 5 years old, for longer-range planning. More detail on inventory is critical.

**Q:** If there no clear knowledge about what needs to be replaced, why have the technology cap?

**A:** Cap is based on average spending over 3 years – tech standard hasn't changed in a while.

**Q:** Will the City fund technology up to the standard if the PTOs aren't allowed to? We are told not to spend above x amount on tech, but if they can't give us the money...

**A:** This is an issue to raise with the School Committee, so they understand there is concern. Budget decisions reside there.

**Comment:** NPS should convey their overall strategy for technology to parents and the community. Everyone would be calmer about what is being taken away. Would like to invite Assistant Superintendent of IT to present to Council.

### Small Group Discussions

Attendees broke into three groups to share information and best practices around three key PTO activities. Facilitators used survey input from PTOC members gathered via Google Form prior to the meeting to shape the discussions. They then reported back highlights of each discussion to the whole group.

- Highlights from **Communications & Community Building** Group (Katie Scott, facilitator)
  - As schools grow, how to keep a sense of community alive?
  - Start small: Design events by classroom--host something outside of the school--and build outward
  - Events planned to be inclusive of all
  - Establish classroom ambassadors/room parents, buddy families (assign to new families)
  - Communicate directly with students, get them excited about events – pass along to their family
  - Using social media. Some PTOs actively use FB, Twitter, etc... and some are nervous about how to moderate it.
  
- Highlights from **Volunteer Recruitment Group** (Karen Hite, facilitator)

Best practices:

  - Direct asks (including an open ask re: what the volunteer cares about)
  - Spread the ask responsibility to the Board
  - Rebranding committees: call them teams and recruit for “team leaders.”
  - Recruiting at Back-to-School/Curriculum Night:
    - use physical sign-up sheets with specific activities
    - board members available for info, help “sell”
  - Create instructions/step-by-step for programs, to leave behind for successors (less intimidating). Advertise that these exist.
  
- Highlights from **Fundraising Group** (Christine Dutt, facilitator)

Best practices:

  - Create fundraisers that also are community builders
  - Link on MySchool Anywhere to pay dues is v. successful, makes it easy
  - Target fundraisers to every income segment, variety of \$ levels
  - Annual appeal/dues – participation % is low, perhaps this is a trend?
  - Would be helpful to have a central guide shared by all schools with general event & fundraising “how to’s” (e.g., how to apply for an alcohol permit, how to run a raffle)

### Speaker Sponsorship Update

*Teri Ginsburg*

Teri reported back on her conversation with Amy Behrens, consultant to the NPS FORJ groups, to determine if they had a need for financial help in sponsoring a speaker. Response was that adding something to their plate would be difficult to take on, they have the year planned out with events. Not out of the question for next year, whether speaker or parent training workshops. Teri will stay in touch.

Does Council have energy/commitment to plan our own speaker event or are we are simply looking to provide \$ resources to other group(s) planning a speaker of broad interest to NPS families?

Consensus is to take longer-term view of spending the money we have allocated for a citywide speaker – look for a good opportunity, whether by partnering or on our own.

Other upcoming speakers @ individual PTOs/schools:

Angier hosting Johnny Coles

M-R hosting Carla Naumberg, author of *How to Stop Losing Your Sh\*t*

SEPAC & NPS Student Services hosting Kristin Jacobsen on Executive Function

Question re: how to involve Boston parents. SEPAC has held event(s) in Boston with good turnouts.