

Newton PTO Council Minutes

12/5/2012

Attendees:

Executive Board

- Co-President - Frieda Dweck
- Co-President - Theresa Fitzpatrick
- Co-President - Rhanna Kidwell
- Secretary - Alicia Bowman
- Equity - Phyllis Attisano
- Political Action/Education - Marcia Tabenken
- Elementary Repr. - May Chiu
- Secondary Repr. - Sue Flicop
- SPED-PAC Liaison - Jo-Louise Allen
- Website Manager - Caroline Wilson

PTO Presidents by School

- Preschool - Alison Lobron
- Angier - Susan Cable
- Bowen - Sabine Akabayov
- Burr - Jason Wong
- Cabot - Jen Abbott
- Franklin - Carolyn Craven
- Mason-Rice - Sunwoo Kahng
- Memorial Spaulding - Doreen Rachal
- Memorial Spaulding - Monica Yancey
- Peirce - Melissa Boucher
- Peirce - Heather Maffie
- Zervas - Joanne Hooker
- Day - Ursula Steele
- Newton North - Sally Brickell
- Newton South - Betsy Blagdon
- Newton South - Lori Lass

Other Attendees:

- Dr. David Fleishman - Superintendent of Newton Public Schools
- Claire Sokoloff - Newton School Committee, Chairperson
- Margie Ross Decter - Newton School Committee, Ward 8
- Megan Smallidge - Coordinator of Communication and Community Engagement

PTO Council bylaw changes

The proposed changes to the PTO Council Bylaws were briefly presented and voted on. All members were previously notified of the proposed changes via email and were given the opportunity for comments.

Changes voted on were as follows:

1. Decrease minimum required meetings from 9 to 5
2. Establish that email can be used as written notice
3. Revise the definition of co-president to allow presidency to be shared by more than 2 people and eliminate the need for terms to be staggered.
4. Give the Executive Board of the PTO Council the discretion to waive the requirement that members of the PTO Council be former PTO Co-Presidents.

Vote (1 per school): 14 yes 0 no 0 abstained

Comments from Dr. Fleishman, Claire Sokoloff, Margie Ross Decter

Override: The Board of Aldermen approved 3 override ballot questions that will be voted on during a special election on Tuesday March 12, 2013. One ballot question is to fund the rebuilding of Angier. The second is for the renovation of Cabot. The third is a general override that includes funding for Zervas expansions. This override also includes money for teachers, police, fire station renovations, road repair, sidewalk repair and installation. Zervas will not qualify for state funding from the SBA so it can be included in the general override. The override includes \$4.5 additional money for schools, \$1 million first year is short term space (cover bonded cost). \$3.5 m for teachers and support for classes k-12. Emily Prenner and Marcia Tebenken are chairs of Building Newton's Future. They are looking to identify coordinators at each school to help get community involvement with coffees, lawn signs, etc.

Enrollment and space issues: The projected student enrollment increase in the next few years is more than 1,000 additional students. This years' kindergarten is the biggest since 1975, next year's kindergarten is projected to be even bigger. Bowen , Burr, Horace-Mann, Mason-Rice will need 9 modulars over next 4 years to deal with current and projected space constraints. There is likely to be a creation of a buffer zone at Cabot for middle school to direct more students to Day as Bigelow is facing space constraints.

Questions:

When will we know what the buffer zone at Cabot will be? Most likely the whole school will be directed to Day with exceptions for families with older siblings already at Bigelow.

What are the plans if override doesn't happen? Scare tactics don't always help, so we aren't focused on communicating that. Modularity and teachers won't happen. If Angier ballot question doesn't pass, will need to make new plan.

How do you respond when people bring up the issues with NNHS? The city has 2 project managers that weren't in place during the NNHS planning and construction. There are also less options, more directions from the state agency, SBA.

What impact has the new sprinkler law had on the ability to expand space temporarily? Can exceptions be granted? Exceptions will not be given for sprinklers. When buildings are expanded (even with modularity) the building must be brought up to code with the sprinklers. Mason-Rice will need to have sprinklers added to enable the modular.

What is happening with the preschool space? Preschool changes are because of additional space needed at Lincoln Elliott.

What about predicted drop in local aid (state funding to cities & towns)? Our budget did not plan on there being an increase in local aid. The SBA building fund is not impacted by this. Sandy Guryan will speak to The School Committee on 12/10/12 to present other short term space costs/options

What other improvements are you looking at? The main focus has been on increasing teaching quality and class size and buildings

What about the amount of administrative assistance in the school system? Newton is very lean in comparison to other school districts on the amount of administrative assistance. There is a great deal of pressure on administrators in Newton's largest schools with one principal. There has been a large increase in enrollment without any additional administrators. At the same time it is hard to sell an override if money is to be used to add administrators.

What is being done to get out the word on the override? The plan for this override should address the issues we expect to face in the next 5 years. The School Committee has reached out to all the schools in hope to visit with parents by February to talk about override. PTOs best partners in helping with this. There are Open Houses being scheduled by the Mayor's Office. There is also an online video being made of Angier, Cabot and Zervas so that residents can better understand the buildings' condition. It would also be helpful for everyone to understand that increasing capacity at any school benefits all of the schools.

Can the PTO Council and individual PTOs take a position on the override? The PTO Council can take a position and has a history of doing just that including: Overrides, NNHS, Sidewalk Shoveling Ordinance . Cabot and Angier school communities have

endorsed the override. The leaders of opposition of the last override have endorsed this override. There is currently no organized opposition to the override.

Megan Smallidge - Coordinator of Communication and Community Engagement

Previous experience includes WGBH

Spent initial time looking at how we communicate, internally and externally

One of the biggest tools is our website, how we can improve the website

New initiatives include:

- Introduced district news link, schools can subscribe to this to add to their own communication.
- Looking to introduce more media onto the site to make it more exciting, draw more visits.
- Working with the calendars, managing across all school and district wide with the goal to create a single calendar with layers for each school
- Happy to get feedback, looking for input to improve communication.
- Schools can submit news stories to npsnews@newton.k12.ma.us
- It would be helpful if every school could include Meg on their school newsletter distribution npsnews@newton.k12.ma.us so that she can stay informed.

Whitsons - April Liles Director of Food Service

80 servers throughout 21 schools

Handouts given at meeting are attached to emailed minutes in a zip file.

What is new out there?

- Michele Obama Let's Move, push to increase health of school lunches. This has impacted what is offered (and how much)
- My School Bucks was launched with Whitsons simplifying the process of paying for lunches. Everything can be done and tracked online.
- Online applications for free and reduced lunch, can now be done by office staff right at school
- Menus online
- School servers have access at school to WMP - includes detailed nutrition information by each menu item information about allergies for individual children and special requests for each child
- Parents can customize account (no snacks, only one lunch, one milk)
- Have streamlined the accounting and check out process

USDA last monitoring of food in schools 2002. They have established new meal program requirements including:

- Vegetables- red and green vegetables must be served
- Vegetable serving size is a cup
- Beans to be served weekly
- Fruit serving size is increased to one cup
- Meals have a maximum calorie count k-6 and 7-12 (not a minimum as before). This smaller portion sizes seem small to kids
- Meal is not a meal unless it has fruit or vegetable
- What is Whitsons doing to meet requirements and help kids make better choices?
- offering selection
- fresh fruit cup at least 3 times a week
- offering beans at least once a week, hummus is popular
- Salad bar at Day
- Deli Bar at Bigelow
- Oak Hill has fresh fruit choices
- At the high schools, breakfast bar, Mediterranean day, Soups (from scratch) smoothies, wraps
- Activity of the month and vegetable of the month
- Waste reduction: waste working collectively what to do with the food kids are not eating, especially fruit

Mass Nutrition Bill

Massachusetts has passed a law setting additional standards affecting school lunch programs. These standards are for what is sold and offered at public schools during the school day. Standards are: sugar limits, calorie limits, no sweeteners, no caffeine, trans fat free, fat limits, sodium limits, no juices over 4 ounces

Use Whitsons as a resource, let us know your concerns

- Provide catering services, nutrition education opportunities, culinary challenges
- Trying to understand why kids are buying less lunches
- Biggest concern, hot stuff is mushy, working
- We can handle special needs: Dairy free, special meals, custom menus
- Chef trek or Nutrition Safari talks to kids about nutrition during lunch – please help us schedule

Newsletters

All the schools receive a ton of news from across city from various organizations. The process is not simple to edit this and there is a great deal of duplication of effort by the

PTOs. Parents are getting overwhelmed by news from various sources, news is overlapped.

OurNewton.org – from your backyard to your home: compiles all the information from various organizations, all non-profits, can be a single source of information.

Run by Sally Brickell, Janet Picaro announcement@ournewton.org

- Centralized website
- Easily searchable
- Calendar based
- Up-to-date
- Broad coverage
- Customize and select information that is relevant to your school
- OurNewton is a community resource and could be expanded to include advertisements if we had more volunteers
- Include link on website
- Looking to find volunteers to help maintain OurNewton.org

PTONewton is used at 8 schools including Zervas, Oak Hill, Bigelow, Newton South, ...

- Enable outbound (proactive) communication and web (static) communication
- Goal: make it easy for parents to customize
- Can pick which newsfeed information will be included in is edited (eg. Flu shot went out with nurses special note, and again with PTO notes... but no need to write twice)
- Frequency and timing of notes can be set
- Can pull dates from the Google calendar, no need to edit further
- Runs on Word Press
- Information belongs to the schools (unlike Constant Contact)

Comments:

- Seems to make sense to share culling information
- The two systems seem like they could work together

Next Meeting:

Tuesday January 15th 7:30 p.m. Newton North Lecture Hall.