

Newton PTO Council Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, October 3, 2017 @ 7:30pm
Newton Ed Center, Room 210

Attendees

Lindsay Pike, Cristal Balis, Kristine Munroe, Lisa DePalma, Adam Brown, Jenn Martin, Maria Conroy, Bonnie McGuire, Kirsten von Hassel, Shana Maldonado, Will Adams, Claudia Rossi, Jessie Gilmartin, Andrea Steenstrup, Liz Flaig, Adam Howes, Caroline Wilson, Tamara Bond, Sally Brickell, Joanna Josephson, Nicky Chapman, Madeline McNeely, Betsy Blagdon, Maureen Oates, Liz Hiser, Jen Abbott, Lisa Schwarzberg, Joanna Mitri, Crista Martinez Padua, Rebika Shaw, Christopher Smith, Angie Abend, Emily Prenner, Christine Dutt.

Introductions/Ice Breaker/Announcements

- Please send Treasurer contact info to Lindsay Pike lindsaypike@comcast.net in prep for “Treasury 101” sessions.
- PTOC Dues are \$100 this year. Invoices will be sent soon.

Equity Overview & Update

Emily Prenner & Jen Abbott

History and description of NPS Equity Policy:

- Philosophy: Education should look the same across all buildings.
- Policy: Cap on private funds raised and spent on items related to curriculum and the classroom in elementary schools. Technology was the exception – at the time it was acknowledged that NPS could never provide it up to standard.
- Equity formula: Proscribes the cap for each school, set each year based on projected enrollment.
- Reporting mechanism: PTOs report to PTOC on spending amounts and categories.

**Elementary PTOs this year need to report data for last 2 years (last year data was not collected) along with total technology spending, to be used as a benchmark. Jen Abbott will provide spreadsheet for reporting. All information needs to be submitted now; it will inform the policy update (see below).

Last update to the policy was in 2014.

2017-18: School Committee (SC) undertaking to update all policies via a Mass Association of School Committee (MASC) initiative.

Will work on updating in Newton in conjunction w/City legal department and PTOC (Equity is the only SC policy that involves a 3rd party).

SC due to release draft of new Equity policy next week; it will be very general.

Process from here: Equity Committee (PTOC, SC, representatives from NPS) will formulate a new policy, to be approved by the SC. Hope to provide clarity within the new policy re: allowed PTO spending on technology. Once SC approves new policy, all procedures in original policy will be null & void. In interim, PTOs should follow old policy.

Jen Abbott: Would like to start a working group to help Treasurers with Equity Reporting, since several years data will be required to catch up.

Current situation re: technology purchases by PTOs: No purchase orders will be issued for technology purchases in any building until requested by Principal, approved by NPS IT department.

Middle & High Schools must follow State law (e.g., no private funds for teacher salaries/stipends) but use own discretion until policy finalized.

Superintendent's Remarks

David Fleishman

Guest, *Amy Behrens*

Living in a time in which unpredictable external events are heavily influencing public education. Challenging societal issues. NPS is responding. For example:

- Elementary Schools: faculty professional development on courageous conversations around race.
- NSHS: One School One Question incorporated courageous conversations
- NNHS: Talking about the meaning of civility
- Appreciate role of PTO Presidents in school communities and bring us in to conversations

Other initiatives this year:

- Student achievement: New elementary math curriculum
- Ease overcrowding: Opening of new Zervas.
- Student Assignment Working Group: Plan for opening of new Cabot, relieve overcrowding in other North side elementary schools.
- Families Organizing for Racial Justice (FORJ) & FORJ Race, Identity & Culture (RIC) – introduces Amy Behrens, facilitator/parent coach. NPS has engaged her to bring families into race, identity & culture conversations happening in schools.

Amy Behrens Presentation:

- Convening monthly meetings for elementary parents across district (next week's has 79 RSVPs) to engage/reflect on race, identity and culture. Parents can return to their school communities and identify needs. The focus is racism, but there are other intersections: gender equity, sexual orientation, religion.
- All-city parent meetings an opportunity to talk openly. PTOs can help by publicizing them. Goal is to meet each school community where they are in the conversation and "where they live." Some may create Community Connections Committees; others have started Boston-Newton Connections groups, Boston Buddies groups.

What can PTOs Do?

1. Support Community Connections Committees. Centrally, they are creating a website with resources, lesson plans. Amy will also be holding office hours, to serve as a resource for individual parent organizers and committee members.
2. Fund activities
3. Help communicate through parent newsletters
4. Meet with parents who are leading/organizing the committees—or any interested parents.

David announced this year's Superintendent's Community Event for Middle & High School Parents: "The Smartphone and its Impact on Schools, Families & Kids" – First week of December. Beth Teitel, moderator. Panel discussion with shared background reading.

Will deal with question: What should we be doing in schools given kids are on the phone all the time at home?

School Committee - A Look at the Year Ahead

Ruth Goldman, Chair of the School Committee

All School Committee meeting info is on the SC page of the NPS website.

Recent Accomplishments:

- Zervas opening (4, 1st grades)
- Cabot ground breaking
- Pre-School moved to 150 Jackson
- Space Upgrades: Ed Center, Brown, NSHS.
- High School Start Time (HSST) Plan: Developing HS schedules this year, to finish at end of 2018, then implementing.
- Policy Manual updating

November 7 Election – Ruth urges us to be informed on the School Committee races.

In response to question, Emily explained the factors that go into deciding whether to call an operating and/or a debt-exclusion override.

2017-18 Initiatives:

- Student Assignment Working Group – goal is to shift district boundaries on North side of Newton to fill Cabot and relieve overcrowding elsewhere. SC will vote on new Student Assignment plan in October 2018.
- Challenging budget – looking @ \$2.5M gap for maintenance of effort. Budget process begins in March.
- Transportation Policy/Working Group – too much traffic @ schools. NPS, City & SC collaborate on this initiative. Most important is safety of kids & families. Policies set at SC level, leadership from NPS, principals, PTOs. Then put in place the infrastructure to follow through, particularly as schools are being built and renovated.
- Full Day K working group (Cynthia Parris Jeffries, Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Ed) – will issue report at the end of the school year.
- Key date: December 17 for Mass School Building Authority decision on Newton proposal to redevelop Lincoln-Eliot. If they give the green light to help fund, this will be the next school capital project.
- Communications: With NPS families, non-NPS-involved Newton population & other elected bodies and officials.

Open Discussion

PTOC meetings and agenda for the year. Many possibilities:

Elementary

- PTO 101 – new Co-Presidents with experienced leaders
- Fundraising – share ideas
- Blue Zone Working Group – dovetail with SC Transportation Working Group

HS-MS

Working Group

ALL

Treasurer Working Group

Sodexo would like to meet with parents. They recently sent out a survey. Idea from PTOC to share results of survey before any parent meeting and then discuss.