

Westbrook Elementary School PTA Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, November 1, 2011

Co-President, Cathy Stocker, called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM.

Approval of Minutes

Diana Sherbacow, PTA Secretary, distributed the October minutes, and asked if there were any corrections. As there were no corrections, the October 2011 PTA meeting minutes were approved by affirmation.

Treasurer's Report

Karen Lambert and Li Ives

- The monthly bank statement is not available until the 2nd of each month so no official report was given.
- A motion was approved to upgrade Quickbooks to the 2012 non-profit version at a cost of \$400. Currently Karen and Li are using the 2007 version, which is no longer supported by Quickbooks. The new version should last up to three years.
- Karen and Li are seeking a donation of a used (lightly) or new laptop. Their current laptop is approximately four years old and ailing. Anyone who is able to make a donation will receive an official letter from Ms. Jones to receive a tax deduction.

Co-President's Report – Cathy Stocker & Karen Thornton

For the record, we would like to thank:

- ❖ Leanne Graeub & Anne Brooks Rudzki for arranging another fabulous Trash Free Lunch Oct. 26
- ❖ Jesse Gordon for taking on the challenge of updating the PTA Website
- ❖ Erica Wileman for the yeoman's effort of updating our Student Directory - will be sending an informational email about how to use online version - will also be making handbook electronic
- ❖ Claire Slabaugh for filling in Gail Dailey's big shoes and helping to keep the front office running
- ❖ Karen Baratz and Liz Jones for organizing the terrific volunteers who supported a fantastic 2nd Grade Artist in Residence program
- ❖ All our Giving Tree donors!
- ❖ Room Parents for the wonderful Halloween parties
- ❖ Lisa Carmel and Laura Kolton for the greatly appreciated and delicious Staff Luncheon

Initiatives:

- Building Construction. The construction meeting notes will be out later this week. The architect, landscape designer, engineers and construction manager were at the school on October 26th for a lengthy discussion and slide show. It was a very informative meeting with a good turnout of 70+ interested parents and neighbors. Prior to the fencing going up on March 1, 2012 a meeting will be held on the specifics of the construction and its affects on daily life at school including line up, dismissal, fire drills etc.
- Parking at Glen Cove & Allan Terrace. Karen has been working with Montgomery County 2nd District Police Officer Denise Gill and they both encourage you to contact the non-emergency number (301-279-8000) if you see a problem. They do want to work with us to address the problems and have suggested engaging retired police officers that serve as volunteers. The volunteers are authorized to write letters informing the parking violators of what they have done and the fee that would be imposed if they were to receive a ticket

by an officer. In addition, a Department of Transportation representative will be visiting the school shortly to meet with Ms. Jones about the signs and if/how we may add to them or change them for the better. In addition, as part of the construction, Ms. Jones has arranged for curbs and fire hydrants to be repainted where appropriate.

- Yearbook (Claire Vincent/Ali Lechter)
In the past, the staff would receive a stipend for putting together the annual yearbook. This is no longer occurring. The choice is to either have the PTA pay the stipends or raise the price of the yearbook. Kathy feels raising the price seems to make more sense given the amount would be incremental. The yearbook price last year was \$18. The new yearbook price with the increase would be somewhere between \$22-\$25. The PTA is happy to act as a pass through for the teachers to be paid up front. A motion was made to pay a stipend to 2 teachers to prepare the yearbook (30 hours for 2 teachers at \$14/hour) and for the PTA to act as a pass through until the yearbook fees have been collected. The motion was approved.
- Sister School - Viers Mill Elementary
Pairing Westbrook with a sister school is something we use to do in the past and we are happy to be doing again with the initiative of Valerie Baruch. Viers Mill is a Title 1 school with a large percentage of students receiving assistance. A collection box will be set up at the book fair for book donations and Viers Mill will be the recipient this year of our annual coat drive. In addition, if possible we would also like to find board games to donate for indoor recess.
- Art Class Room Volunteers
Ms. Cervenkov-Peet is open for volunteers in her classroom and open to donations to enhance what she is doing. We will see if she would like to put something up on the "Giving Tree."
- After School Activities

Glee Club
There has been a tremendous response and we are attempting to add another section on Wednesdays. Both sessions will come together for an end of the year concert. In addition, we may try to incorporate instrumentalists to accompany the club in the future.

LEGO update
We are planning on offering 2 sections of Snack Attack, which would be open to kindergartners and 1st graders. Each section can accommodate up to 6 kids. We are planning on running Lego club right after school on Wednesdays and/or Thursday for 7- 8 weeks in January and February. Lego Club will cost between \$50 and \$75. For the older kids, we are partnering with a group called Adventures with Robots. We have currently arranged to offer one class for 2nd and 3rd graders and one class for 4th/5th graders. We can open each of these sections to 12 kids. These classes will also start in January and they are currently scheduled for Wednesdays. The classes will be around \$110. Registration for both activities will occur sometime in the next month.
- 2nd Middle School
Karen heard back from George Leventhal (Montgomery County Council At-Large Member) regarding the plans to build an additional middle school. Dr. Starr does plan to include an additional middle school in the Current Improvement Plan (CIP) at the proposed site. The CIP with Dr. Starr's recommendations may be

found online. Comments to Cathy and Karen from those in attendance were that we want to make sure there is as much parity as possible between the new school and Westland and that we continue to monitor the developments of the new school as they move forward.

- PTA Website Update
We plan a grand re-launch of the website with updated and repackaged material at the start of the new year. If you have material you'd like to see available on the site, please contact Karen Thornton.

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Principal's Report

Ms. Jones reported the following:

- There are 2 MCPS policies up for review. Policy ECM-Joint Occupancy of Montgomery County Public Schools and Policy KGC-Childcare. The draft policies are up on the MCPS website and Ms. Jones will send them out. A response is required by December 29th.
- Dr. Starr will be holding a "Listen and Learn" on Wednesday, November 16th, 7:30 PM at B-CC. This is a great opportunity to meet and hear from the new superintendent. The following night, Thursday, November 17th, 7 PM at Bethesda Elementary will be a session for parents of 5th graders who will be attending Westland Middle School next year. Westland Principal, Mr. Vogelman, will be in attendance.
- Thrilled to have Susan Holcomb (most recently with Bannockburn Elementary) on board as our new Attendance Secretary.
- Thank you for the staff luncheon and supporting the "Giving Tree." Any additional donations are welcome especially balls for our playground. The playground equipment/balls just don't last very long so we appreciate any contributions. Thank you also for the goody bags for the parent teacher conferences. They are given to everyone working in the building – teachers, cleaning personnel, support staff – it is a team effort and we really appreciate it. Any Halloween candy that you would like to drop off in the office is always appreciated and made available to the staff.
- New lunch room procedures. We are having the kids sit down after they clean up their lunch rather than standing in class lines. We are trying to make it an easier transition, have less yelling and understand that this is down time for the students.
- Westbrook will be getting a new Visitor Management System (VMS). This system has been put in 80 MCPS schools so far and all schools will be getting the system. Currently it is in place at Westland. Instead of signing in on a sheet of paper as we currently do, there will be a computer to slide an ID and then an automatically a visitors pass will be printed. Allows us to track visitors and runs the visitors information through a database that checks for sex offenders. The system will be up and running soon so please remember to bring an ID with you when you come to volunteer.
- New Homework Policy. Overall the comments have been positive. We are trying to focus on homework being reasonable, purposeful and meaningful. The change came about through conversations that began after viewing the "Race to Nowhere" and discussions with the teacher leadership team which expressed a strong desire to change the way we had been giving homework. The policy was not changed because parents requested less homework. The idea is to make homework more connected to the student's lives with real world tasks instead of busy work. Assignments are not excessive and reinforce the point of establishing the routine of homework and practice.

Teacher/Vice Presidents Report: Natalie Atkinson, Julie Crain, Beth Marans

Ms. Atkinson gave a brief report on each grade level.

- Kindergarten: Homework begins November 14th. Reading - diving into integrated curriculum and continuing with reading groups. Math - learning number sense by practicing different ways to make numbers. Science and Social Studies – discussing weather, seasonal changes - globes -compare to maps.
- 1st: Reading – working on fluency and how developing different responses helps us to better understand an author’s message. Writing – using family artifacts to help organize informational writing. Social Studies – discussing family traditions and customs.
- 2nd: Field trip to Strathmore on November 15th. Beginning descriptive writing, doubles and continuing basic fact practice in math.
- 3rd: Field trip to BCC to see “James and the Giant Peach.” Beginning unit 2 in Math. Social Studies unit is studying economics.
- 4th: Weeded and prepared soil in 4th grade courtyard and added to the planting they did in Kindergarten. Gone to Little Falls Stream with the Department of Natural Resources to monitor the health of the stream. Living Classrooms for a day on the Bay to work on science boats to learn about the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.
- 5th: Beginning poet genre study. Science – beginning study of electricity and magnetism, learning about circuits.

Parenting Seminar Tuesday, November 15th

1st parenting seminar – Deborah Rothman is a nationally known Baltimore-based sex educator. She will discuss how to talk with kids about sex. When she came to Westbrook a few years ago she was very well received and those parents who missed it were sorry they did. Family life unit begins in 5th grade so it may be an event 5th grade parents won’t want to miss.

Committee Reports

PE Liaison - lunchtime walking program is being revived by Kathleen McDermott

Welcoming Committee - is still seeking anyone who is interested in mentoring a Westbrook family

Skate Night is December 3 - we still need one person to volunteer to help with the event

Fall Cleanup - is November 19

Special Needs - working on kids assembly and parent training - November 15th Dr. Starr will be meeting with the Special Needs Committee – this is open to all parents and staff

Upcoming PTA Activities/Dates to Remember

Nov. 9-11 Book Fair open for sales 8am -8pm

Nov. 9-11 Spirit Wear display and ordering

Nov. 9-10 Ledo’s Nights

Nov. 10 & 11 Early Release Days (parent/teacher conferences)

Nov. 23 Early Release Day

Nov. 24 & 25 Thanksgiving Holiday (no school)

Dec. 3 Skate Night

NO DECEMBER PTA MEETING

NEXT PTA MEETING – TUESDAY, JANUARY 3rd

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 PM.