

Walt Whitman High School  
PTSA Meeting Minutes  
April 13, 2010

**Welcome**

PTSA Co-President Vicky Strella welcomed everyone to the meeting in the Media Center.

**Approval of January Minutes**

The Minutes from the January meeting were approved.

**Student Government (SGA) Report**

Brandt Silver-Korn, Senior Class Officer, provided the report. He noted that the following SGA-sponsored events are coming up later in April and in May:

- Mr. Whitman
- SMOB Elections (Student Member of the Board of Education)
- Class elections
- Voter registration of students
- Spring Fair

The whole community is invited to join in the fun of the **Spring Fair**, which will take place on May 14<sup>th</sup> from 4:30 to 8:30. While the SGA, which foots most of the bill for this event, has some money for it, the hope is to raise more, specifically a few thousand dollars more. Soliciting donations from local businesses and from Whitman parents' businesses has been more difficult this year than it was last year, due to the economy. Therefore the SGA is accepting tax deductible donations from individuals. Volunteers are also needed to do shifts of a couple of hours, as a big crowd is expected. Last year over 1,000 people attended, including kids of all different ages since the Fair is designed for all ages. Media coverage is expected from the *Gazette* and the *Washington Post*, as was the case last year.

Dr. Goodwin praised Brandt for coming up with the idea for the Fair and for being so involved in planning it.

**Principal's Report**

***Winter sports teams*** at Whitman were unusually successful this year, in particular the Boys' and Girls' basketball teams and the Girls' Swim team, which beat out 52 teams to win the Metros.

The ***new gym floor***, which was needed due to flooding in the winter, opened on April 12<sup>th</sup> and looks great. The cost came to about \$200,000.

***Staffing***. Enrollment is projected to go up at only three MCPS High Schools next year, and Whitman is one of those. Whitman is expected to gain 108 students, but because of new staffing requirements, staff levels will remain about the same as this year. Because

of the close tracking Diane Long has been doing for staffing needs and hours, Whitman will be able to hire 3 special-ed teachers, and 4 para-educators including two for regular classes and two for special-ed.

Teacher morale is not as high as usual because this is the second year in a row that they are not receiving a pay raise. In addition to that, class size will be going up next year, most likely to 33 students for most regular classes except for English, which will have a limit of 27. Assistant Principal Jennifer Webster has done a terrific job as Master Scheduler, but unfortunately she cannot work her magic to prevent there from being some bigger classes next year.

***Music Trip.*** The Carnegie Hall music trip is coming up, with the performance by Whitman students taking place on April 24<sup>th</sup>. About 1,900 members of the Whitman community will be attending this event.

***Senioritis.*** A few seniors chose to skip school to go to a drinking party at a private home before spring break. The Administration reacted by suspending those students.

***Sexting.*** This new activity has reared its ugly head lately, with an investigation by the Montgomery County police being conducted of some Whitman and Pyle students. The nude and other inappropriate photos that were sent, sold, and traded via iPod Touch devices were of Pyle students. Engaging in this kind of activity is dangerous and possibly criminal. It is important to be aware that it is going on in this community and parents should talk to kids at quiet moments about appropriate behavior and appropriate use of these kinds of technologies.

### **Assistant Principal's Report**

***Scheduling.*** Jennifer Webster provided a report about scheduling for next year. If there are any adjustments needed, Ms. Webster needs to know by May 7<sup>th</sup>. After that date she cannot guarantee that requested changes can be made. On the teaching front, the Administration is still looking for a Latin teacher.

A question was then asked about the possibility of keeping students in the same classes all year rather than switching to a new set of teachers mid-year, as is currently done. The response by Dr. Goodwin was that while this is an educationally sound idea, it's almost impossible to do because of scheduling complications. It has been tried among 9<sup>th</sup> graders at Wheaton High School but was found to be fiscally unfeasible.

***New school website.*** There have been some complaints about the appearance and uneven content of the School's website, so Ms. Webster has directed a revision and transfer to TRON through MCPS. Ms Webster has led a web team of parents and students, including students Alex Rhea and Neal Malkani, parents Elise Mahaffie, Ravina Malkani, Vicky Strella and Sue Kanter, computer teacher Hong Wang and athletic director Andy Wetzel. The new website is going live on April 19 (the address remains the same) and should be very straightforward and easy to use. Information will be posted in a more timely way than in the past. A demonstration was given about how the new website

works. In appreciation for all the hours Ms Webster and Alex Rhea devoted to this effort, the PTSA presented them with gifts.

### **Nominating Committee Report**

Anne Hollander, the Committee Chair, presented the names of the Nominees for the 2010-2011 PTSA Executive Committee. The slate is as follows:

President: Jay Kaufman

Executive Vice-President: Robin Rosenblum

VPs for Membership: Debbie Flack and Sharron Brossi (continuing from this year)

VPs for Volunteers: Wendy Kuhn, Melinda Rubin

Treasurer: Mario Finelli

Recording Secretary: Catherine McMullen (continuing from this year)

Asst. Recording Secretary: Jodi McGill

Corresponding Secretary (Whitnet): Meredith McGuire

Anne noted that the PTSA wants to have staggered terms for the co-Presidents, so that one person will be continuing to the following year. Next year Robin Rosenblum will be the one who plans to stay on for two years, while Jay Kaufman will serve for one year. The election will take place at the May PTSA meeting on May 18<sup>th</sup>.

### **President's Report**

Vicky Strella provided the report. There were several successful *parent-led volunteer events* this winter. They included a 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Networking Night, organized by Catherine Baker and Helen Montfort, a 12<sup>th</sup> Grade Networking Night that focused on Beach Week, organized by Rebecca Kahlenberg, a Stressbusters event that focused on Colleges that Change Lives, a Capital Steps performance hosted by the Post Prom Committee, and the very popular International Night, organized by Maryam Hedayati and ESOL teacher Sonja Maroni. There was also a Beach Week meeting at Walter Johnson HS, which Whitman co-sponsored. The event may be at Whitman next year.

In addition, there were monthly CAC meetings, and meetings of the Intercultural Committee, which now has about 25 members. The Intercultural Committee gives parents the chance to experience the richness of our diverse community by organizing outings and educational and social events.

The deadline for the next issue of the *Viking Voice*, which is sent to all Whitman families and incoming 9<sup>th</sup> graders, is April 20<sup>th</sup>. Notices about events need to be in by that date.

May is a busy month at Whitman, with the Spring Fair, Festival of the Arts (sponsored by the Art Department) and Prom and Post-Prom all coming up.

### ***Post-Prom Report***

Beverly Snow, Post-Prom treasurer, provided the report. Post-Prom is very close to reaching its fundraising goals and many people are working hard to make it a safe and fun night for the students. There are a lot of volunteer options for parents to help out. There are also amazing raffle prizes given out during the evening, as a way to entice kids

to come there rather than go elsewhere and jeopardize their safety. Some of the prizes include an iPad, bicycles, and a MacBook. The event is free and all seniors are welcome, even those who do not attend prom.

Dr. Goodwin noted that all the effort that goes into Post-Prom is worth it to keep our kids safe.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Sue Kanter provided the report. The PTSA is pleased that all is well with the budget and that there are likely to be extra funds at the end of the year. Required membership dues have been paid to the State, local, and national PTA organizations. Funds remaining, in addition to PTSA operating expenses such as newsletter printing etc, can be distributed to teachers for professional grants, to teachers or other staff as one time grants, or possibly to help with security costs, which have gotten very high.

### **Membership Report**

Membership is way over projected numbers. 942 families joined the PTSA along with 392 students and 46 teachers.

The meeting was adjourned around 8:45 PM, and a Stressbusters Committee-led discussion of the book *The Good Enough Teen*, by Brad Sachs, began a few minutes afterwards.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Rebecca Kahlenberg, co-Recording Secretary.