The first PTA meeting of the year was held on Wednesday, September 4, 2019. There were 32 people in attendance.

Amy Goldberg, co-president, introduced the Executive Board, and made the following reminders. All are encouraged to like the Willard elementary PTA Facebook page. The website is a wealth of information on dates and more detail about specific events, forms and more. A reminder and invitation to sign up for Owlnotes was also provided. It was announced that all Committee Chairs can request that Amy distribute information or announcements on our website, as well as on Facebook. A reminder and correction was made regarding Curriculum night which is slated for September 12th.

Heather Voznak, treasurer, introduced the budget and discussed new line items including Scholarships, Willard Wear and the Bathroom enhancements that were made over the summer. She also noted that all payments are encouraged through Cheddar Up. Katie Ojala noted that there isn’t a way to add additional funds via Cheddar Up for additional giving or a donation as was available in the past on the hard copy forms. While the presidents investigate a solution, it was suggested that additional money could be added to whatever payment was being made for a short-term solution.

Minya Nance, co-president, shared that one goal of the PTA is to be transparent with the evaluation of the PTA’s goals. There will be a continued focus on school culture and equity. The inclusion of families of TWI students will also be a focus. Concern was voiced regarding mode of communication, as well as the lack of opportunities to get kids together more at school. The presidents will aim to provide better support to this underserved population. Tiffany Winn, co-president, shared that they are more likely to put more emphasis on proposals that address these concerns when not in the typical approval cycle. They will also elicit direct feedback from parents and encourage feedback on goals any members of the PTA or parents of students might suggest.

Volunteers were requested to help Nancy Lopez, Spirit Wear committee chair, to sort and distribute the free Willard **Spirit Wear** t-shirts on Tuesday, September 10th.

Beth Flintoft gave an overview of the **Green Team**. The team thanked Jerry Michel and Jerry Succes for their support. She outlined the core schools participating which include Washington, Chute, Willard and Dewey. The teams at each school are urging everyone to think more sustainably. The kick off meeting for the District Green Team is September 17th at the Civic Center. She also provided a recap of the Green Team’s accomplishments including getting composting in the lunchroom - which allowed for composting 7,000lbs of food scraps. The teams also worked district-wide to capture 100s of boxes of school supplies that otherwise likely would have been thrown out from the end-of-year teacher classroom clean outs and bulk school supply extras. She recognized the help of the Garden Committee in securing and planting the native flower plantings along the fence by the bus cut out. The committee also organized Eco-education days on Wednesday half days of school. Moving forward they are looking for a chair for the resale in order for it to continue. They will also continue to organize the Owl Oasis with igloos coolers and cups. They have invested in tablecloths to use at events vs. plastic tablecloths. She noted that they will be looking for volunteers to help wash the tablecloths at the end of each event.

Kate Lister, **PTA Council** Representative, gave an overview of what the councils work aims to do. The PTA council is a gathering of representatives from all 18 schools in D65. They start the year off with district initiatives and meet monthly thereafter. Council Reps participate in discussions regarding district initiatives including financial, population, curriculum (and more) topics and then share the information with their individual school communities. They act as a liaison between the district and the schools. A question was asked in support of a push for all people’s history in the curriculum. While the agenda has not yet been set for the PTA council, there is a strong likelihood that it will be discussed.

As the district pursues filling the vacant superintendent role, there is the opportunity to attend a district meeting to give feedback on what is wanted in a superintendent on September 13th.

Elizabeth Davies provided an overview of the **PTA Equity Project**. The project is designed to address disparities between experiences at different schools throughout the district. Their funding has three sources; A general Go Fund Me account that can be donated to at any time, general outreach to the community (i.e. Restaurant Week, which is the last week of September 2019), and direct contributions from those PTAs with revenues over $90 per student. Five schools have revenues this high. Funds are distributed to the school with revenues less than a specific dollar amount per student. A question was raised regarding how the contributions to the schools will be communicated and/or publicized.

Sarah Peterson gave an overview of the **Community Conversations** on race. There is a community-building BBQ and conversation event on September 25th at Willard. An overview of district wide equity events was also shared. Willard will be the host for the last of these.

Mr. Michel, Willard Principal addressed the PTA. In regards to safety, he noted that with the road construction project on Lincolnwood, the city had agreed to keep passage on Park Place left open so students are able to get to through safely to school. Additionally, on the west side of the school, cones will be placed on Central Park Ave to keep people from parking on East Side of the street as this is an extreme hazard to children crossing the street.

On curriculum night, Mr. Michel will give a presentation on some of District 65 initiatives including restorative practices.

Beyond Diversity, a training program that every D65 employee completes, was also discussed. SEED, which is a course involving 10 monthly 3-hour sessions (equating it to a graduate level course and which a majority of Willard staff has completed) is once again occurring. SEED stands for Seeking Educational Equity & Diversity. The work of being anti-racist and equity is ongoing work and it is important for all of us to learn and realize it is actually lifelong work.

This year, Willard will be working to develop and define a Mission and Vision statement. This will include work with all stakeholders. Willard will also be consciously moving toward encouraging more intrinsic behaviors among the student body. There will be more rigor looking at standards. Reading was identified as one place where more gains in student success and abiltiy is desired. Overall, the staff will be asking what has been done and/or what are we doing to cause this vs. trying to figure out ‘what is wrong’ with the kids. They are working to recogne how institutionalized racism affects things today.

In discussing the aim to have more integration of TWI, Mr. Michel offered that the main constraint is the amount of instruction needed in Spanish in which non-TWI students can’t participate. The district has identified that the true solution is a two-strand school to truly provide an integrated experience.

In response to discussion regarding if transportation were a deterrent to some students being able to participate in extracurriculars, Mr. Michel communicated that there is a late bus during certain times of the year for bus riders.

He also shared that the capital project for the field in between the two playgrounds continues. The plan includes adding combination of a track, drain tiles, and native prairie grasses with deeper root systems to try and make it a more usable space that isn’t as likely to just be a mud hazard. There has been a long build to this project (5-6 years). Willard has been transparent about the plans of this project with the district Equity Committee. Bids on the project will begin this fall.

Lincoln, Willard and Washington are currently the largest schools. This year, Willard has an enrollment of approximately 505 students. Staying this size will allow us to keep the services we currently have. As the size of our population has decreased, we have lost some funding for services such as one reading specialist.

A parent thanked Mr. Michel for the pronoun use noted at the end of his signature.