

Blind Brook PTA
General Meeting
Thursday, November 18, 2021
7:00pm
Blind Brook MS/HS IMC (In Person) and Via Zoom
MINUTES

I. Acting Superintendent Update: Colin Byrne

- A. The K/1 Wing of the Ridge Street School is scheduled for an inspection Monday afternoon. Therefore, all after school activities will be canceled at RSS on Monday. If the wing passes inspection, the permit has to be processed by SED. Hopefully by Thanksgiving, or else soon after Thanksgiving, we should have a temporary certificate of occupancy.
- B. To move, we would transition to the new space in stages, rather than scheduling one or two moving days and holding remote instruction those days. We're going to prioritize those students who are in the least optimal spaces right now. It should take about a week for everyone to move to their new spaces.
- C. RSS Parent/Teacher Conferences will take place Friday 12/3 and Thursday 12/9. They're going to be virtual- there was some disappointment. We went back and forth. We ultimately decided to stick with Virtual because although people are vaccinated, it's still a little concerning at this point to have that number of faculty members exposed to people who may be carrying the virus. If the teachers got quarantined, we would have to move to remote instruction. Also, there will be custodians moving furniture etc, which is hard to manage with people moving in and out of the building.
- D. We are moving to have fewer and fewer virtual meetings. We are going to look to have in-person from that point on. We are going to look for opportunities to have people see the interior of our newly constructed spaces and see how the classrooms look.
- E. I have been asked whether vaccinations will be available on campus. That is our goal. We really would like to do that. Ryan Naccarato sent out a survey to gather interest. He did communicate with the Westchester Co Dept of Health. We now have to wait our turn in line behind everyone else who wants to have a vaccination site. The DoH also has to do a site visit in order to set that up.
- F. Now that children 5-11 are getting vaccinated, the question is going to come up whether students need to wear masks to school. Right now, NYS requires kids to wear masks to school. Our local conference of superintendents has requested some guidelines regarding when students need to wear masks. For example, in Massachusetts, if 80% of students in a school are vaccinated, students won't be required to wear masks.

- G. **Q: If we had a vaccination site for Ridge Street Students, would that take up space on a campus that already is short on space?** We would look for a space that is not used after school, like the Fab Lab.
- i. **Comment: With so many new vaccination sites coming online, perhaps it's not a good use of space. Perhaps Blind Brook should survey families again, because we are finding more options since the survey was conducted.**
- H. **Q: Last Friday, I was at the school in the afternoon. Children were sitting on their towels on the cement after school, eating their snacks. Why are kids still sitting on the ground?** I will bring this question back to Ridge Street tomorrow and get back to you.
- I. **Q: The water filling stations haven't been installed because Blind Brook is still looking for the space. The students are entitled to water. The PTA has been funding water bottles. The environmental impact is not good. Wouldn't it be a better solution to have large Poland Spring water dispensers in each classroom?** I will bring this question back to Ridge Street tomorrow and get back to you.
- J. **Q: We can't have face-to-face parent/teacher conferences. One reason you just stated is that you're trying to protect your educators from being exposed to us. What do they do on the weekends? They don't go out? They don't get together with their families? This doesn't make sense. We can't go meet our kids' teachers; we have to do it by zoom. Our kids are always masked and we would be masked -- what is the difference? If the inspection goes well, we're going to be opening the K/1 classrooms before Dec 9th, so moving furniture would not be a factor. It's unfair that we can't go into the school and see the interior of the building. We'd like to see how the school looks.** I will bring this question back to Ridge Street tomorrow and get back to you.

II. Co-Presidents' Report: Cameron Sager and Correy Stephenson

- A. Thank you for participating in the Salvation Army fund-raiser. Including the money that came in yesterday, we're just above \$5100. You can also contact the Salvation Army and donate your free turkey, if you have a coupon. They have a really nice facility: they have a gym, a food pantry, you can get diapers there, etc. They never turn people away. They are really meant to serve Port Chester, Rye, and Rye Brook. There are other Salvation Armies for other zip codes. They are so nice, and they are really doing great work for the community.
- B. Thank you to Patricia Schofield for updating the PTA bulletin board!! It was terribly outdated.

III. **Acceptance of last month's minutes: Approved.**

IV. **Treasurer report: Lynn Glantz**

A. October 2021 - net gain of \$10,726 mainly due to fall fest, PTA membership, school supplies.

B. Here are highlights:

1. Major Revenues: Gross Profit/Loss: **\$15,144**

| | |
|----------------------|---------|
| Membership | \$2,460 |
| Fall Fest / Clothing | \$4,646 |
| School Supplies | \$7,470 |

2. Expense Total: **\$4,417**

| | |
|----------------------|-----------|
| PTA State Dues | \$(2,381) |
| RSS Teacher Supplies | \$(1,377) |

3. Total Net Revenue (Loss) - **\$10,726**

V. **Ways and Means: Alicia Scala and Kate Marino**

A. Winter Fest: Saturday December 4th! It will be a fun day!

1. We are having a winter plant sale at Winter Fest on Sat, December 4th. Tonight is the last night to order plants. We are not going to order many extra plants to sell the day of the event.
2. Rachel Lerner and Katie Wolff are planning a Holiday Boutique, which will run at Winter Fest - great job. Boutique items will include bead kits, bracelets, necklaces, custom creations, fidgets, etc. Pricing will range from \$3 to \$25 per item.
3. Winter Fest will also feature Caffè Bon, if anyone would like to purchase hot cocoa and treats.

4. Hopefully the HS band will be there!
 5. There is a raffle, too- pre-order tickets tonight. 12 different raffle items: keratin treatment, restaurant gift cards, in-home massage, bagels tray, precious home necklace, google home mini.
- B. Spirit wear: Mr. Horowitz and I are working on finding a date during the week of the book fair to have a spirit wear sale.
 - C. Our Thanksgiving pie sale was really successful. We sold 200 pies! If you ordered a pie, please remember to pick it up on Monday 11/22.
 - D. After School Activities (ASA): hopefully will start in January.
 - E. We are discussing a spring fund-raiser gala. It could be a “done with construction” celebration. Please share any ideas you have!
 - F. The Book Fair: Will run 11/30-12/4. The last day of the book fair will be Winter Fest day. **Q: Are parents allowed to show up and shop with their children?**
Yes, a class visitation schedule will be going out to parents.

VI. Programming: Amanda Gitkind and Shana Koransky

- A. Jester Jim is happening this evening in the MS gym. We have 87 2nd/3rd graders in attendance!
- B. Look out for upcoming information for our December gingerbread making evening. We are definitely offering this to K/1, and will likely also do a 2nd night for middle school.
- C. We are looking into bringing back the Harlem Wizards in Jan/Feb. Just waiting for feedback on covid mitigations.

VII. RSS Liaison: Rachel Lerner

- A. Parent-teacher conferences are Friday, December 3rd (12:30-3:30pm) and Thursday, December 9 (5:00-8:00pm). These days are 1/2 days with early dismissal at 11:30am.
- B. The book fair is Tuesday, November 30 - Saturday, December 4, which coincides with Winter Fest. Tracy and Theresa are going to do a read-aloud at 6:30pm on Thursday, December 2 at the MS/HS auditorium. Kids are encouraged to wear their pajamas.
- C. There is going to be a bluebird chat this month and the topic to be discussed is AIS and enrichment.
- D. Play dates continue to not be allowed on the bus.
- E. Once the K/1 wing is completed there will be additional space available, and the kids will be able to eat in the gym. Specials, except gym, will be held in their respective rooms. Gym will continue to be held outside, weather pending.

- F. This year I volunteered to help Alicia and Kate with the holiday boutique part of the Winter Fest. Thank you to all of the board members, community members and students that have offered to help out at the event! Katie Wolff has been helping me with the planning and we are really excited about all of the wonderful local businesses participating. Beadbow, Custom Creations of Rye Brook, Foil to the Max, Happi Trays, Marla Beth Designs, Summer 2u and Wonnerful. There are going to be many great gifts for everyone on your list ranging from \$3-\$25. There also is a raffle with 12 items: everything from a keratin treatment to an in-home massage and acupuncture treatment.
- G. **Q: During the last Bluebird Chat, Tracy talked about Ruler, this new outside source we are using to support the mental health for all of the children. I was hoping the next Bluebird Chat would talk more about that.** It's being implemented with older grades so far. They are training a core team at each school. There isn't a rollout date. It comes from Yale. We don't think it's been implemented at the elementary school yet. We want to support the mental health of all of the children.
- H. **Q: There are still no playdates on the bus- when is that going to be reinstated?** Ridership is up. The buses are pretty crowded. There is not necessarily room. It's still a pandemic.
- I. **Q: The district began discussing a Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity initiative a year or two ago. What happened with that initiative?** It's not a building specific question- it should be directed toward the board of ed.

VIII. MS Liaison: Alex Boruch

- A. This morning, Mr. Hotowitz held the first Middle School principal's coffee of the year. It was full of slides and pictures. It was the best one we've ever had! Some highlights from the coffee:
- B. They're doing an amazing job of keeping the environment friendly, with positive messages all over the building, such as celebrating diversity. Kids have inspirational quotes above their lockers, which they chose and designed.
- C. The MS celebrated cultural months. Teachers are seeking literature from authors of diverse race, gender, etc.
- D. The school hosted their first matball tournament- it was fun!
- E. Starting in Dec, the MS will introduce festive Friday's. It may hold Friday night events once per month.
- F. There is a school spirit club.
- G. Club attendance is up- they're doing really well- kids are in multiple clubs.
- H. Mr. Horowitz thanks the PTA for procuring MS apparel to sell. The HS is the Trojans, RSS is the Bluebirds, and the MS is working on coming up with their own mascot.

- I. Some parents have made comments about the weekly updates: they include a lot of photos, so parents can see what's going on.
- J. The counseling program has been re-branded to the Student Support Suite- a place to feel safe and comfortable.
- K. A question came up about assessments: Some parents are concerned that kids are not where they should be due to covid. The STAR test and Achieve 3000 take place throughout the year. The MS is doing them more often so that teachers can assess what kids need.
- L. There was a survey that went out to faculty and students about the block schedule (introduced in fall 2019). (Soon, the MS will survey parents.) Some results: 75% of the staff liked the block schedule. 90% of students were in favor of the block schedule. The students asked for more PE time and complained about the double period of English. The students were very happy to be asked their opinions.
- M. **Q: What was the length of a period before?** 41 min, and now it's 53.
- N. The MS is looking into possibly setting up an advisory system, where small groups would meet with a faculty advisor once a cycle. Mr. Horowitz also spent time talking about possibly introducing WIN (what I need), a period where kids could go to Learning Center, get homework help, collaborate on a project, etc. Certain teachers could call for certain kids.
- O. Overall, a lot of new ideas and positive momentum!

IX. HS Liaison: Jen Savner

- A. Performances of the play Clue are this weekend. Friday night at 7pm and Saturday night at 7pm. Tickets are sold at showtix4u.com. In addition, Cheryl Artabane will be selling tickets 1 hour before each show in the lobby of the HS.
- B. Winter Sports are underway.
- C. "No Place for Hate" may be a program that will be run throughout the entire district... in all 3 buildings. That is still under discussion.
- D. The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) club is forming a committee and working with Monique of the Coalition to brainstorm methods and techniques when confronted with an uncomfortable situation. The DEI club is also hosting a potluck lunch in hopes that many people will participate and bring dishes from different cultures. The club is really working on bringing people together and they are looking to possibly do an event with Port Chester HS in the spring...
- E. Homecoming weekend is January 21st. Trying to make it special. Senate has been talking about doing a Homecoming Dance. The idea of a dance had mixed reactions so a survey is going out to peers.

- F. Administration and teachers are learning more about the RULER approach to mental health. It was developed at the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence. The goal is to recognize, understand, label, express, regulate. Many admin and teachers have received their training, and Dr. CHirles hopes to offer training to parents in the coming months.
- G. The parent survey about the bell schedule and block scheduling went out. The form which is using the thought and exchange forms (way more detailed and can be a source of greater amounts of info than google forms) will be live until Dec 3rd.

X. Pupil Services Liaison: Kiki DeBari

- A. As always, if any parents would like to join SEID, I'd be glad to add you to the email list.
- B. Pupil Services is very excited about the ICT program. They want to keep the momentum going and will reach out to parents of ICT students to gather feedback on the program.
- C. I completed my Parent-Member training. I can officially attend CSE meetings as a parent member. We have a few trained parent members in the district. Parents can take advantage of us as a support. We can help make sure you understand everything at the meeting. It was valuable training, hopefully it will be a good resource for parents in the future.

XI. Membership: Bree Candee and Stacy Kapner-Lerch

- A. The PTA is up to 521 members.
- B. We sold 154 Dial-a-Friends. All books have been delivered. We have 6 leftover DAF books if anybody wants to purchase one.
- C. All people are updated in memberhub.

XII. Community Coalition: Debra Cohen

- A. Today is the Great American Smoke Out. Our MS Youth Leadership club (which includes 20 kids!) is really excited and enthusiastic. They decorated the front of the school with scarecrows stating facts about smoking and vaping. Students will be signing the pledge to commit to be vape free. We played some trivia, too. In the MS a lot of 6th graders are pushing us out of the way to run the tables - it's great to see their enthusiasm!

- B. Monique has been doing Escape the Vape- an escape room. Last month, we did Hidden in Plain Sight. You have to be there and look, touch, and feel. People asked a lot of questions. People have asked if we can do it again. We will, but not right away. We're looking for speakers right now.
- C. Next meeting is Dec 1 on Zoom at 8:45. I'll send the zoom link out before Thanksgiving.

| Attendance | |
|--------------------------|--------------------|
| In Person | On Zoom |
| Kiki DeBari | Erika Beintrexler |
| Alex Boruch | Nethra Bhatt |
| Rick Buzin | Stephanie Biderman |
| Debra Cohen | Hedy Cardozo |
| Elizabeth deBlasi | MCD |
| Mindy Friedman | Robyn Deutsch |
| Johanna Gonzalez | Concetta D'Inverno |
| Katherine Hallissy Ayala | Zachary Dore |
| Stacy Kapner | Lynn Glantz |
| Rachel Lerner | Seth Horowitz |
| Karen Lin | Kerri James |
| Kate Marino | Katie |
| ToniAnne Rigano | Sara Levine |
| Jen Savner | Catherine Li |
| Alicia Scala | Steffany O'Neill |
| Patricia Schofield | Rich |
| Ann Sedrish | Anna Romanella |
| Correy Stephenson | Ella Rosenfeld |
| | Perri Ross |
| | Ann Rossmann Weisz |
| | Cameron Sager |
| | Sari |
| | Kori Sassower |
| | Robyn Scutero |
| | Samantha Smith |
| | Chris Stone |
| | Monique Tricario |
| | Cindy Zahl |
| | Luci Zimmerman |