

Blind Brook PTA  
General Meeting  
Thursday, October 21, 2021  
7:00pm  
Blind Brook MS/HS IMC (In Person) and Via Zoom  
**MINUTES**

**I. Acting Superintendent Update: Colin Byrne**

- A. The Ridge Street School construction project continues to move forward. Windows are going in. We are aiming for a November date for the opening of the K/1 wing. When we have a concrete date, we will let the community know.
- B. There have been some concerns for the Ridge Street School fire alarms. In a couple of locations, we have been adjusting the volume etc. Adjustments will be complete shortly if not already done.
- C. The district had a lockout this morning. As you may have heard, there was an incident on the Hutch this morning. The Rye Brook Police had been in communication with the Harrison Police. The Rye Brook Police recommended we stay safe with the Lock Out to make sure we took extra precautions.
- D. Please note this morning's security status was a lock OUT not a lock DOWN. Understanding the terminology can help parents gauge how concerned they might be regarding the situation. Everyone was safe in the building, and when the police let us know everything was safe, we lifted the lockdown.
- E. We have had some shortages on our administrative team, and we are getting some help. The board recently appointed Joan Pinkerton as a Curriculum Specialist. She will help us to work curriculum initiatives such as the teaching of writing and addressing the needs of Advanced Learners. We want to keep the curriculum initiatives going.
- F. An update on the Business Office: We are still looking for a business official. We will be appointing Susan Sherkon as an interim business official. She was an assistant principal at the MS in years past, and she was Superintendent for Finance and Facilities at Edgemont. Ms Sherkon is retired now, but she has agreed to come help us for a while.
- G. **Question: Regarding security at the front desk in the Ridge Street School: Mr. Rivers retired. Has a replacement been hired?** The position is posted. We should fill the position shortly. A substitute is sitting in for now. **She is due to have a baby next week.** If we don't have a full time person, we'll have someone in to cover.
- H. **Question: Would you please tell us more about the Board of Education survey on "the characteristics of a student?"** We are currently in the middle of a strategic planning process, to help us form a long term plan. We'd like to

develop a plan that encapsulates all the functionalities of the district, ranging from academic to social/emotional to safety etc. Jonathan Costa is a consultant we have brought in to assist with the process. He is very knowledgeable, and he has helped other districts with this process. We met once, and we are meeting again tomorrow to review the thought exchange that went out. The survey is a tool to learn what is important to the community. Once you submit your thoughts, you can see ideas contributed by others, and rate the importance of other thoughts that have been contributed. We are looking at what the community feels are the key aspects students should have by the time they graduate, which will form a framework on what direction we should take.

- I. **Question: Who is the person who oversees the facility, in terms of ensuring that the certificate of occupancy is up to date, stays on top of the warranties, and makes sure things are fixed?** Louis Rodriguez, the head of maintenance, stays on top of those issues as much as he can.
- J. **Question: Once the new K/1 wing opens, will the spaces currently used as temporary classrooms for K/1 be available as specials classrooms for the benefit of all students in the school?** We are aiming to open the new K/1 wing in November, and we are having conversations as to how we can best use the spaces that will open up.
- K. **Question: We've had good weather so far, but where will RSS students eat lunch when it rains?** They will have to eat in their classroom. **Q: Will they be spaced out enough so that they won't all have to quarantine if someone tests positive for covid?** We have been discussing some possibilities: students could eat in smaller groups, we could alternate who is eating vs. having indoor recess.
- L. **Question: What is the role of Dr. Ross?** Right now, Dr. Ross is doing some consulting work for us with the construction project. He is helping with some calculations and reviewing contracts.
- M. **Question: Has the TCO been extended past the end of next week?** No, not to my knowledge yet, but we will take care of that before it expires.
- N. **Question: Will the district set up a vaccine clinic?** Ryan Naccarato, our new Physical Education/Athletic Director, has been in contact with the county Dept of Health about setting up a vaccination site within the community. He is trying to gauge interest. We need at least 25 people. Westchester DOH is working with us.
- O. **Question: What is the turn-around time on getting a new TCO, and when does our current TCO expire?** I don't know the date it expires, and I'm told it's a relatively straightforward process, compared with attaining or last TCO.

## II. Acceptance of last month's minutes: Approved.

### III. Treasurer report - Lynn Glantz

- A. Sept 2021 - net loss of \$12,517 mainly due to refunds of cancelled half-day programming in Sept.
- B. Major Revenues: Gross Profit/Loss: **(\$6,651)**

Membership	\$7,650
Clothing	(\$4,304)
Half-Day Program*	(\$12,571)

- C. Expense Total: **5,864**

Bank Fees	\$(1,157)
Teacher's Appreciation Lunch (May Expense - Late)	(\$4,164)

- D. Total Net Revenue (Loss) - **(\$12,517)**

### IV. Ways and Means: Alicia Scala and Kate Marino

- A. Our Fall Fun plant sale was super successful. Thank you to the volunteers and to Mr. DiMiceli for helping with the event!
- B. We are planning another sale on 12/4. It will coincide with the book fair. We are going to have winter plants and a holiday boutique.
- C. We're planning a MS Spirit wear sale coming soon- stay tuned
- D. We're also planning a pie fund-raiser with White Post Farms on Long Island. A committee of volunteers recently came together.
- E. The PTA After School Activities (ASA) had to go on hold, so we are just getting that back. Hopefully we'll begin sign-ups at the beginning of November.
- F. We are organizing a thank you luncheon for RSS staff next Friday, 10/29.
- G. We also installed a bunch of really awesome balloon sculptures outside the school and in the school.

**V. Programming: Amanda Gitkind and Shana Koransky**

- A. We have some exciting things happening. We are in the midst of bringing back Jester Jim, an old favorite. We are figuring out a space, and we hope to organize a Jester Jim pizza night in mid-November.
- B. We are planning a gingerbread decorating event in December. We considered offering it to the lower grades, but then we thought everyone likes decorating gingerbread, so we would like feedback about whether Middle School students would like to participate.
- C. We will collaborate with the MS Phys Ed dept regarding the Mat Ball tournament.

**VI. RSS Liaison: Rachel Lerner**

- A. Tracy and Theresa are finalizing the dates for parent teacher conferences. They are waiting on assessments which were a little delayed with the remote learning. AIS and Enrichment are going to be discussed more in-depth, most likely in a Bluebird Chat. Bluebird Chats are going to continue on a monthly basis.
- B. Picture day is next week: Wednesday 10/27 and Thursday 10/28. Pictures will be taken outside, and teachers will be reaching out with your child's assigned date/time information.
- C. Many people are asking about indoor lunch. However, until the K/1 wing is completed, nothing more can be done given our current space. Once the K/1 wing is completed, we can have one gym as a lunchroom option.
- D. Grade level field trips are being worked on. They need to be connected with grade-specific curriculum as well as follow COVID protocols.
- E. Once the gyms open, the goal is to have in-house assemblies like we used to and the kids would wear masks and be 3' apart.
- F. Overall, we are hoping to get back to doing things and events as we did in the past. We are hopeful Creating connections can resume in the spring.

**VII. MS Liaison: Alex Boruch**

- A. The middle school recently held its first ever Club Fair. As a result, the number of students participating in clubs and extracurricular activities has skyrocketed!
- B. Thank you to those who joined us at last week's parent workshop and principal's conversation. The evening was titled "A Parent's Guide to Surviving Middle School" and was a great opportunity to learn and laugh together. Next month's workshop will be held on Tuesday, November 9th. Stay tuned for additional information.

- C. 1st Quarter Progress Reports were posted to the eSchool Parent Portal earlier this week.
- D. This month's character theme is PERSEVERANCE. Students have been exploring various ways to persevere when challenged. This month, every student in the building will be selecting a quote they find to be inspiring. After reflecting on why the quote is meaningful to them, students will create a visual representation which will be hung up above each student's locker.
- E. Next week is Red Ribbon Week, the largest drug-abuse prevention campaign in the country. We are partnering with the Community Coalition to create daily activities and events aimed at educating students about the dangers of drug and alcohol use.
- F. Next Friday, October 29th, the middle school will hold its Halloween celebration. This year's theme is Famous People & Characters. Students are encouraged to dress according to the theme. Those who prefer not to dress in costume are asked to wear pajamas so that we can all have some fun together.
- G. BBMS is holding a Matball Tournament on Thursday, November 4th from 6:00-7:30 PM. Students are encouraged to sign up on the sheets hanging on the Gymnasium doors.

**VIII. HS Liaison: Jen Savner**

- A. Things have felt more typical and normal in the HS. The school is focusing on upcoming events and committees.
- B. A new committee will be formed, called "No Place for Hate." It will be more like a club. It is in conjunction with the Anti Defamation League and the DEI club. It will involve students and adults talking about and thinking of actionable ways to create a school without antisemitism etc. Dr. Chirles will be looking for some parents to help mentor and guide this group of students.
- C. A Strategic Planning Committee will form as well, and this committee will be focused on goals and visions of a Blind Brook Graduate. The committee will seek to define what we want our kids to focus on, take away with them, etc.
- D. There will be questions going out on a form called Thought and Exchange Polls which is an online tool that allows more expansive feedback and ideas.

- E. National Drug Take Back Day is this Saturday, October 23rd. It is in conjunction with Rye Brook Police and The Community Coalition. It will allow families to dispose safely of the expired or excess prescription drugs.
- F. Red Ribbon Week is coming up October 23rd-October 31st. The purpose is striving to keep kids drug free.
- G. The Fall play is Clue. The Spring musical will be Mama Mia.
- H. October 26th is the PSAT for Sophomores and Juniors who are interested in taking it. There will be no regular classes. If you are not taking the PSAT, it is encouraged to use the day to go visit a college. Freshmen are going on a field trip focused on team-building.
- I. November 2nd is Election Day (no school for Middle/High school).
- J. College Apps are underway.

IX. Pupil Services Liaison: Kiki DeBari

- A. We held our first SEID event last Thursday. It was a coffee with Mr. Burg and Ms. Carpanzano, who offered an overview of the new Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) program in the elementary school for grades 1 through 4. It was a great event. We had quite a good turn-out. We have a recording and will post it for anyone who is interested. The ICT program involves not just Special Ed families, but also General Ed families.
- B. Erica and I met with Pupil Services this week. We will share our notes with the SEID Community. Let me know if you'd like me to add you to our distribution list.
- C. We have formed a SEID executive board. We will meet next week to discuss coffees and presentations we would like to share with the community.
- D. We do our best to share special education or parenting events/discussions that are happening in Westchester. I will add you to our distribution list if you'd like to be on our list.
- E. **Question: Any chance you could include "EmailTheBOE@blindbrook.org" on the distribution list?** Yes.

X. **Membership: Bree Candee and Stacy Kapner-Lerch**

- A. We have 508 people in membership. You might have all recently gotten emails from MemberHub.
- B. We have just under 520 members in MemberHub (including teachers registering).

- C. We have 153 paid Dial A Friend orders, plus teachers' copies. Books are being printed, and we will have them next week. We hope to have them delivered by the end of month. If you have an elementary school child, it will be given to their teacher. If you have a HS or MS child, we will deliver to the house.
- D. All member information is up to date and entered in MemberHub.
- E. Thank you to Tami Rodriguez for creating our beautiful cover art for the Dial A Friend!

**XI. Community Coalition: Debra Cohen**

- A. Next week is Red Ribbon Week, a drug prevention awareness week. We will organize various related activities at the MS/HS
- B. We are taking the 9th grade to the Northern Westchester BOCES team-building activity challenge course. It's a low ropes course. Students will get to interact with kids they might not usually be with and learn new skills. We hope the weather will be clear - it should be a great day. The trip is sponsored by the Community Coalition.
- C. Saturday is National Drug Take-Back Day. There is always a box at the RBPD. You can especially drop off Saturday. No sharps.
- D. Next Wednesday at 7PM in the MS/HS Cafeteria, we will hold a Hidden In Plain Sight Room. The set-up will simulate a teenager's bedroom and simulate what kids are using for drug paraphernalia. Parents can walk through a child's bedroom and see what is there that you might not realize is drug-related. Come even if you don't have a teenager -- you can see what is coming up in the future. See the devices, they don't look like what you would expect.

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

- A. The PTA will be sponsoring a fund-raiser for the Salvation Army in Port Chester. They've been feeding more people than they ever have before. We raised \$7,000 last year. We bought them close to 150 gift cards. Look for more information via PTA email and the Rye Brook Residents page on Facebook. Last year, tons of people gave donations. We reached out to the Salvation Army again. They have so many people in need. They have lots of programs and they need volunteer bell ringers. We will coordinate with Cindy Zahl, who coordinates HS student community service. We will ask

individuals for \$5 - it's a nominal amount of money, but everyone's little bit adds up to a lot. Will get students involved, too, in the HS senate.

**XIII. New Business:**

- A. Dr. Buzin: Thank you for helping the teachers move back into school. The main reason I came today is that I have an unusual set of circumstances. Most of you were probably in elementary school when I was on the board. The last time I was on the board was 12 years ago. I was first elected 25 years ago. I have grandkids. When people ask why I came back to the Board of Ed, I say I have grandkids- not in the district, but nearby. I ran into the fire. Hopefully I can help put the fire out and get us back on track to what we've always been: a great district with great parents and great teachers. Thank you for having me. If you have questions, I am always available- I'm retired. Good luck this year with all of the PTA programs- they sound great.
- B. Next PTA meeting is Thursday 11/18 7pm, in person in the MS/HS Library (IMC) and on zoom.



Attendance	
In Person	On Zoom
Rick Buzin	Nethra Bhatt
Bree Candee	Kathy Billig
Debra Cohen	Hedy Cardozo
Amanda Gitkind	Kiki DeBari
Johanna Gonzalez	Robyn Deutsch
Katherine Hallissy Ayala	Meredith Dolgins
Stacy Kapner-Lerch	Erika
Rachel Lerner	Marcy Ferdtschneider
Karen Lin	Jared Friedman
Kate Marino	Tami Herzog-Rodriguez
Cameron Sager	Seth Horowitz
Jen Savner	Kerri James
Alicia Scala	Alyssa Karasik
Patricia A. Schofield	Kenro
Correy Stephenson	Katie
	MCD
	Leah Mittelman
	Yvette Montvelisky
	Melissa O'Neill
	Steffany O'Neill
	Nancy Parra
	Itzel Piserchia
	ToniAnne Rigano
	Danya Rosen
	Perri Ross
	Anne Rossmann
	Sari Sakofsky
	Christy Sanchez
	Pam Schloss
	Ann Sedrish
	Laura Sileo
	Pooja Singh
	Samantha Smith
	Chris Stone
	Sara Wolf
	Laura Wolther
	Cindy Zahl
	Luci Zimmerman