

Blind Brook PTA  
General Meeting  
Thursday, November 12, 2020  
Via Zoom  
**MINUTES**

**I. Superintendent's Update: Dr. Patrick Brimstein**

- A. Read about Blind Brook's COVID Town Hall [here](#) or watch the recording [here](#).
- B. Thank you to parents who completed the COVID survey this fall. A summary of responses can be found [here](#). Some take-aways from the RSS survey responses:
  - 1. Parents recommended the school should screen student temperatures as they enter the building.
  - 2. Parents were impressed with the RSS safety protocols.
  - 3. Teachers have been responsive to parents, and families can sense how much the teachers care.
  - 4. Families appreciate the IEP support.
- C. **Question: Why are schools going fully remote because teachers need to quarantine? Do we not have enough subs, or is it just cost-prohibitive to pay both teachers and subs?** Response: We have very few subs in the system. When a MS/HS student comes to school with COVID, that case can put 6-9 teachers into quarantine. We schedule subs as best we can, but we run out of human resources at some point. At the MS tomorrow, we have a great number of teachers out, but they will zoom into their classrooms. Other adults in the building who are not necessarily subs will sometimes supervise a class while the teacher zooms in. We are trying to get more subs. Every other school district in our area is struggling with the same problem.
- D. **Question: As a parent, now that the HS is going remote tomorrow, will there be any more discussion about keeping all the schools remote for a period of time in order to keep all the staff and students safe?** Response: Our staffing right now is extremely tight. We just took the HS remote tomorrow. It will probably be remote next week, until the school break begins. The MS has just enough staffing available to stay open tomorrow. More families are signing up their students for fully remote learning next week. We need to decide whether we can run in-person classes in the MS next week. The actual numbers and what we are able to support is going to end up making that decision for us.
- E. **Question: Where are we with Ridge Street construction? If things got better in the middle of the year, we were hoping the kids could go to school with their entire class. Will there be space for them?** Response: What we announced was a significant effort to get this project going in the right direction. We've had complicated situations with relationships between contractors. We've hired a consultant and a new construction management company. We are pushing through a few issues, but I expect work will resume on the campus within the week. The timeline on the project is Dec 2021/Jan 2022 completion, if everything goes well. The new spaces will not have a Certificate of Occupancy by this spring.

- F. **Question: Is there any movement on the question of having in-person instruction on Wednesdays at the MS/HS in January? Could the school cleaning be done at night? Kids are getting zoomed out...** Response: The idea of in-school Wed every other week has been bounced around since we started planning the hybrid schedule. There isn't an overwhelming parent demand for having students in school every other Wed, but there is an instructional benefit of having the whole class together on Wednesdays, even if they are on zoom. We will bring up the discussion with the MS/HS administrators to consider the pedagogical benefits.
1. **Follow-up:** The cmte to evaluate block scheduling plans to speak with teachers in every dept, to evaluate whether to hold classes in person on Wednesdays. Teachers have felt like students liked having Wednesdays as the whole group.
  2. **Follow-up:** Perhaps the question of MS/HS Wednesday's could be on a survey in the future. A lot of people would value that extra day of in-person learning.
  3. **Follow-up:** A lot of MS/HS teachers are live streaming and therefore have the "whole class" five days a week.
- G. **Comment:** The governor feels that the effectiveness of the vaccine will begin to be felt at the end of January. He is beginning to look at phasing in of major businesses in March/April. The next six weeks look bleak, but the governor is determined not to order another "NY Pause" unless the hospital capacity reaches the threshold.
- H. **Question: Are vaccinations going to be required for students and teachers once they are available to us?** Response: I am not ready to answer that question yet. We just did our first round of testing with volunteers. We will have discussions about vaccines with the labor groups.

II. **Approval of last month's minutes: Approved.**

III. **Co-President's report: Cameron Sager and Correy Stephenson**

- A. Thank you, Patricia for re-organizing the bulletin boards at Ridge Street!

IV. **Treasurer Report: Lynn Glantz**

- A. November 2020 - Loss for the month mainly due to spending on teacher wish lists, clothing and umbrellas.
- B. Major Revenues: Gross Profit/Loss: **\$(2,787)**
1. \$(3,652) - Clothing Sales
  2. \$109 - Membership
  3. \$63 - Amazon rewards
  4. \$693 - Virtual Paint Night
- C. Major Expenses: Expense Total: **\$(7,867)**
1. \$6,267 - Wishlist & teacher gift
  2. \$1,324 - Accounting fee, Bank fee, reconciliation
- D. Total Net Revenue - **\$(10,654)**

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

- A. We're cutting back on fund raising because we can't do things in person.
- B. Looking at bringing Boosterthon back. It's a character-building and fund-raising program. A Boosterthon rep hypes up the kids and encourages them. We're looking at March for a virtual Boosterthon. We felt like this is the best approach for the spring because we can't do much in person.
- C. We just closed our online spritwear store. It's all sports apparel. We will have a spring sale with the more glittery clothing for girls. Pet spirit wear is coming.
- D. We plan to bring back PTA Mother's Day plant sale in May. It will be similar to last fall's mum sale.
- E. Question: Would you consider holding a virtual auction after the holidays?
- F. The minted promotion is still happening through the end of December.

**VI. Programming: Amanda Gitkind and Stacy Sakellariou**

- A. Paint night was a success- 107 students registered in total.
- B. There was a lot of parent interest. We may plan a Parent Paint Night in the spring.
- C. K-5 Virtual Magic night with Tricky Tim is Thurs, 1/21.
- D. Kindergarten parents-night-in is being organized for the first week in January (theme: cocktails and cupcakes).
- E. Looking into student virtual cookie decorating activity for February

**VII. Ridge Street School Liaison: Rachel Lerner**

- A. The parent teacher conferences went well and teachers received positive feedback from the parents. The reason conferences were done via phone rather than zoom is because some teachers were concerned with possible connection issues. They are looking into zoom for the next set of conferences in the spring.
- B. The current semester ends at the end of January, and report cards are going to be released at the beginning of February.
- C. Bluebird Big Give Wish list has been posted on the bluebird corner. We would love for each class to donate an item (or two, depending on the item) for one of the four children's hospitals selected.
- D. If you're thinking of keeping your child home or switching to remote learning, please let the school know as early as possible. Notify the principal, teacher, nurse and RSS attendance. The more notice they have the easier it is for planning. This allows the teachers to make sure your child has all the materials they need. The teacher needs to plan and prepare for the child(ren) that are not present in the classroom.

**VIII. Middle School Liaison: Alex Boruch**

- A. The PTA Reflections program is wrapping up. We have received 10 submissions so far.
- B. 2nd marking period progress reports will be posted on December 21st at 3:00PM.
- C. Virtual rehearsals for the middle school production of Frozen Jr. are proceeding well. Cast members will be scheduled to conduct pieces of their

performance on the stage for professional recording which will be edited into the seamless final production.

- D. Clubs have adapted to the virtual format and are moving ahead with their various initiatives. The Student Government decided on an innovative way to continue their annual tradition of a Toys for Tots drive. To avoid contact with all of the toys, the Student Government has decided to send, on behalf of BBMS, a check of \$200 to Toys for Tots. They also provided everyone the option to purchase toys virtually from home and have them sent straight to Toys for Tots on their website:  
[https://toysfortotsbox.com/?utm\\_source=Toys for Tots Foundationutm\\_medium=Website\\_DonateAToy&utm\\_campaign=ToysforTots\\_from\\_TFT](https://toysfortotsbox.com/?utm_source=Toys%20for%20Tots%20Foundationutm_medium=Website_DonateAToy&utm_campaign=ToysforTots_from_TFT). They ask that if possible, donations be made before winter break so that our school is sending everything collectively.
- E. Student Government is hosting **Pajama Days** on December 18th and 22nd, one day for each cohort.
- F. The yearbook club is looking for your help. They ask that you help provide pictures for the yearbook by visiting the Herff Jones eShare app or go to [www.hjeshare.com](http://www.hjeshare.com) and enter school code bbms. Pictures will be selected by the yearbook staff for inclusion in the yearbook.
- G. Wednesday, December 23rd is a shortened day. The schedule is posted on the MS webpage.
- H. The middle school wishes all a safe and healthy holiday break!

#### IX. **High School Liaison: Jen Savner**

- A. Parents have expressed concern over students' inconsistencies on being remote vs in person. It appears to be too random. It feels inconsistent and haphazard. Dr. Chirles is going to discuss putting in place potentially a 2 week rule if a student decides to go remote.
- B. The HS plans on hybrid learning continuing after break. Most feel that in-person learning is much more beneficial for students than remote so as long as they can do it safely, that is the goal.
- C. If we were to go remote in January, the cause would most likely be due to the staffing limitations.... Staffing is analyzed each day, due to the need for teachers to quarantine after COVID exposure. Sometimes, as a result of just one case, many teachers need to quarantine. The HS has just 4 subs.
- D. Parents and students have expressed that assessments continue to be an issue at the HS level with many of them happening on the students' in-person days. Dr. Chirles plans on reiterating for the teachers to really utilize the shared calendar and urges the students, that if running into an issue, to talk to the teacher and figure out another plan. Dr. Chirles can always be contacted as well if a student is running into an issue.
- E. Dr. Chirles is going to discuss a Club calendar so that clubs can meet in a more organized fashion and more consistently.
- F. Some seniors are hearing from colleges. We'll get more of an update in

January.

- G. There is going to be an online winter concert. Stay tuned for dates. The Lamarie Project was filmed and will be online in January.

**X. Pupil Services Liaison: Kiki DeBari**

- A. Tina Steinberg and I met with Harry Burg and Jennifer Herlihy last month. Another successful meeting. We shared details of this with our SEID members, if anyone would like to be added to our e-mail list, then please find our details on [the Blind Brook PTA website](#).
- B. Our next event will be held on the evening on January 6th. We are lucky enough to have Lisa Newman offering a presentation. Lisa is a Rye Brook resident, who very successfully navigated education nuances and raised two daughters, both with individual differences. She now runs a consultancy providing help and advocacy for local families just starting out in the process. More details will be shared closer to the time.
- C. Tina and I will be meeting with Harry and Jenn again next Tuesday. Please let us know if you have any questions you would like us to present on your behalf.

**XI. Membership: Bree Candee and Stacy Kapner**

- A. We got a few new members. We are just under 500 members.
- B. We have a few more dial-a-friends if anyone wants one. Cash or check.

**XII. Community Coalition: Debra Cohen**

- A. As a community we donated over \$5000 in stop and shop gift cards to the Salvation Army. Thanks to everybody who participated!
- B. We have a youth leadership club in the MS. The club recently made a TikTok encouraging kids to make safe choices during Covid. We're trying to get students to follow their TikTok account. The club is thinking about health and safety ideas to promote on social media.
- C. In January, we are going to be presenting with Dr. Luther from Authentic Connections (the company that did our survey on substance abuse issues). Jan 6th - faculty and staff will get a presentation on survey results. On Jan 14th (next PTA meeting) there will be a presentation of the survey results at 6:30. Peer pressure, perception of risk, how much kids are using (alcohol, smoking, drugs, etc). It's eye-opening to review the survey results and understand what teens are facing.

**XIII. Attendance**

Ali Altman Rebecca Amado Anne Jana Berman Nethra Bhatt Stephanie Biderman Shy Biswas Alex Boruch Arpita Buesing Bree Candee Hedy Cardozo Debra Cohen Wendy Corbin Kiki DeBari Mackenzie DeCollibus Robyn Deutsch Mikayla Dolgins Amanda Gitkind Johanna Gonzalez	Lynn Glantz Katherine Hallissy Ayala Tami Herzog-Rodriguez Stacy Kapner Charul Kothari Feliks Koyfman Laura Rachel Lerner Karen Lin Maddie Kate Marino Paige Mittleman Allison Mendelsohn Yvette Montvelisky Jennifer Nates Michelle Pohlman Rebecca Reiss Tonianne Rigano Naomi Riley Betsy Rohtbart	Anna Romanella Tara Rose Perri Ross Cameron Sager Sari Sakofsky Jennifer Savner Alicia Scala Patricia Schofield Ann Sedrish Stacy Sakellariou Tina Steinberg Correy Stephenson Verionica Erica Wiener Andrew Wolf Katie Wolff Cindy Zahl Rebecca Zaltas Jayna Zelman Luci Zimmerman
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