

Blind Brook PTA
General Meeting
Thursday, January 14, 2021
Via Zoom
MINUTES

I. Superintendent's Update: Dr. Patrick Brimstein

- A. We have been very fortunate. The few Covid cases we have had in the past few weeks have been confined to students who were already quarantined because a family member had Covid.
- B. Construction has resumed. I thank the board and its focused efforts to get things moving. We've had a lot of proactive meetings with contractors. We have a new management company helping us with the project.
- C. The district and the Board of Education have been working to develop a strategic planning process where we will engage the entire community in recognizing the things we value and we'll align our efforts to further our values. We'd like to focus on getting the most important things done first and continue from there.
- D. I've been working with the principals at the MS and HS, with a recommendation that social studies teachers discuss current events, put things in context, and answer questions. Martin Luther King Day is coming up, and we'd like to weave diversity and character into the social studies curriculum. At home, the simple act of listening to one another is an incredibly powerful parenting tool.
- E. **Question: Has there been any talk about going back full time this spring once the faculty receives vaccinations?** We've passed along all of the governor's and county emails about teachers' access to vaccinations, and we're making accommodations for teachers to get vaccinated. We can't make a prediction now, but we will plan for all contingencies along the way.
- F. **Question: Is there any follow up the opportunity for MS/HS kids to go into school on Wednesdays?** As of right now, we are hanging on to the MS/HS Wednesday fully-remote day because it's the one day that teachers can have the entire section together. That time is well-received among teachers. Once we decide to start trending toward a full re-opening, we will have Wednesdays in school as an interim step.

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

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

- A. Following are the upcoming monthly PTA meeting dates: February 11, March 11, April 22, May 20, and June 10, 2021.

IV. Treasurer's Report: Lynn Glantz

- A. In December 2020, we had a net gain of \$8,000, mainly due to Membership and photos (from last year). Following is the breakdown:
- B. Major Revenues: Gross Profit/Loss: **\$9,848.79**
 - 1. **\$(2,050)** - Clothing Sales
 - 2. **\$(633)** - Virtual Paint Night
 - 3. \$3,250 - Membership
 - 4. \$8,701.01 - School Pictures
 - 5. \$56.78 - Square Art
- C. Major Expenses: Expense Total **\$(1,743.98)**
 - 1. \$1,670 - Wishlist and teacher gift
 - 2. \$73.98 - Accounting fee, Bank fee, reconciliation
- D. Total Net Revenue - **\$8,104.81**
 - 1. Lots of deposits, not much spending.

V. Ways and Means: Alicia Scala and Kate Marino

- A. Boosterthon will run from March 16-25, with the goal of community, character building, and fundraising for outdoor space enhancements.
- B. Plant/spiritwear sale set for either May 1 or May 8. We will monitor the community covid numbers as plans progress.
- C. We're in the very early stages of planning a huge ribbon cutting/spring fest celebration for Spring of 2022. Fall Fest 2021 won't be possible due to construction, as well as uncertainty about large gatherings next Fall. We doubt we'd be able to have an event of that size in October. We'll be asking for committee volunteers in the coming months.
- D. As a reminder, we decided over the summer, along with Correy and Cameron, to not overwhelm the community with financial asks this year, as everyone's situation during the pandemic is different. We're so grateful to be in a position where we don't have to, due to the hard work of the PTA, as well as the generosity of our community over the last few years.

VI. Programming: Amanda Gitkind and Stacy Sakellariou

- A. Next Thursday 1/21 is Virtual Magic Night with Tricky Tim! No need to sign up each of your children; you only need to sign up once as a family.
- B. We are in the process of planning Kindergarten Night In, a casual question and answer, ice breaker event. Our goal is to help kindergarten parents, who may be new to the district, to meet people.
- C. We'd like to plan a Valentine's Day cookie decorating event for kids, where we supply a cookie decorating kit to each participant. Look out for an email.
 - 1. **Question-** Since it will be a virtual event and there are many children who have food allergies, is there a non-food alternative that could be available?
Response: Yes, we will incorporate that into the plan.

VII. Ridge Street School Liaison: Rachel Lerner

- A. New Policy: If you haven't completed EZ SCRNs, your child will not be admitted. Complete it one hour before drop off.
- B. The end of the first marking period is the end of this month and report cards are coming out early next month.
- C. As of now state testing is on; however, no other details are known. The tentative testing dates were pushed later this year than regular years. Once the possible dates get closer, we'll see what the state says and plan from there. Ideally, testing would not be done as cohorts. Language arts could be the 3rd week of April and Math could be the 1st week of May. Science would be at the end of May or early June.
- D. Construction is back on and moving along nicely! Everyone seems quite pleased with the progress.
- E. The building emergency response team is working with a company on how to safely evacuate the building (beyond a fire drill), if ever needed.
- F. With the ongoing construction there is lots of security in play so the school is also working on increasing security.
- G. If there are any class parties this year, incorporating community service into the party plan would be a welcome idea.

VIII. Middle School Liaison: Alex Boruch

- A. Musical "Frozen Jr." is making great progress. Filming has started in various locations, including Crawford Park. There will be ticket sales and a premiere evening. Date is still TBD, (hopefully end of February early March).
- B. The Student Council is doing great work. They're organizing a new program called "Operation Gratitude" where students will write letters to active soldiers.
- C. Scheduling for next year is beginning
 - 1. Incoming 6th graders - parent Zoom meeting 7pm on March 9th
 - a) hopefully an orientation where kids get into the building in late spring
 - 2. Incoming 7th graders - parent Zoom meeting 7pm on March 4th
 - a) Math Placement based on STAR scores and teacher recommendation
 - 3. Incoming 8th graders - parent Zoom meeting 7om on March 2nd
 - a) Math/Algebra or Math 8 Placement. Math can be changed from the year before.
 - b) Physical/Earth Science Placement.
 - c) Letters will go out to parents at the end of February advising of Science Rubric score and advising which math best.

- D. Teachers are currently getting vaccinated. Will vaccinated teachers still have to quarantine? We do not know yet.
- E. Reflections Program - 11 students from all 3 schools entered. All have been sent to the Region for the first round of judging.
 - 1. From RSS:
 - a) K George Belta, photography
 - b) Annabelle Zigler, literature
 - c) Fin Goldstein, visual arts
 - d) Hayden Goldsein, visual arts
 - 2. From MS:
 - a) 6th grade Iris Chen, literature
 - b) 7th grade Abigail Weintraub, literature
 - c) 8th grade Iris Gu, visual arts
 - d) 8th grade Emily Tian, visual arts
 - e) 8th grade Rachel Horn, Film Production
 - 3. From HS:
 - a) Tiffany Cho, visual arts
 - b) Josh Rosenblut, Photography
- F. Pictures for 6th and 7th graders and for those 8th graders who missed is soon.

IX. High School Liaison: Jen Savner

- A. Dr. Chirles asked for the PTA's support in spreading the word about masking, safe decisions on the part of the HS students and limiting parties and large gatherings.
- B. In terms of online schooling, the teachers have mentioned that they are feeling that at times the students are not taking school as seriously while remote which has been challenging. Dr. Chirles and I discussed that remote schooling is getting quite tiring and students are either finding ways to maybe cheat (eek!) or being too relaxed about their work. The teachers are available for extra help and are happy to work with students who may be finding a subject challenging.
- C. The Laramie Project will be streaming this Friday and Saturday at 7pm. A link has been sent. They are working on a musical for the spring as well.
- D. Talked a lot about Seniors and Graduation, Prom, Award Ceremony etc. Many ideas of how to run these events have been thrown around. The hope is that they can be held outside in some capacity. Maybe the number of people that are able to gather will increase.
 - 1. As for Prom specifically, a tent, food trucks was one idea.
 - 2. A "red carpet" and step and repeat sign so everyone can see the kids dressed up was another idea.

3. The High School may consider hanging Senior Posters around the school, or possibly a senior dress up day or day trip.
- E. Dr. Chirles is really trying to come up with safe and fun activities for each grade as hopefully things begin to get better.
- F. And finally, the administration is always looking at the schedule and knows that it is evolving as numbers change. But one thing that will most likely be implemented is that if your child needs to be remote for whatever reason, it will need to be for at least 2 weeks. It is too challenging for the teachers to have kids and parents deciding by day which has been happening.

X. Pupil Services Liaison: Kiki DeBari

- A. Tina and I met with Harry Berg and Jennifer Herlihy in December. We had a lot of questions, which we were able to get answered. Details of the questions and answers were shared with SEID members.
- B. On January 6th we held our second SEID event. Lisa Newman, a former Blind Brook parent, who now has her own special needs consulting practice, conducted a very informative presentation. Educating us on special education rights and advocacy. The event was recorded and the deck was shared with SEID members.
- C. We are due to meet with Pupil Services at the end of the month. Please send any questions and we'll always do our best to get these answered.
- D. Our contact details can be found on the PTA website, under the SEID tab.

XI. Membership: Bree Candee and Stacy Kapner

- A. A few new students have entered the system. We have entered them into SchoolBee and sent invites.
- B. We have a few extra Dial-A-Friend books if anybody wants to purchase.

XII. Community Coalition: Debra Cohen and Monique Tricario

- A. We have a few events pending approval for this spring. We have proposed to sponsor some trivia nights for MS/HS students. It will be an opportunity to socialize in a safe environment, and we'll pepper in prevention questions. We will bring in a professional to run it. Feb 25th (HS) and March 4 (MS). They'll be free, just sign up.
- B. We'll be showing the film "Upstanders" on March 18th, in response to the pattern of envy and social media comparisons driving kids to be anxious. "Upstanders" is a follow up to the film "Like." It goes deeper into cyber bullying and social media. We will follow the film with a panel discussion. It's an amazing movie, recommended for ages 10 and up. It does deal with some sensitive topics, like teen suicide. It is dark at points, but overall the topics are important and need to be discussed.

- C. April 14th is Junior Driving Night. If you are a junior and you want to drive to school as a senior, you and a parent need to attend the event. As in past years, we will bring in a speaker and talk about distracted driving and drinking and driving. Kids take a survey/assessment afterwards.

Attendance:

Ali Altman	Johanna Gonzalez	Rebecca Reiss
Jana Berman	Kerri James	ToniAnne Rigano
Nethra Bhatt	Katherine Hallissy Ayala	Naomi Riley
Shy Biswas	Julie	Tami Rodriguez
Alex Boruch	Stacy Kapner	Betsy Rohtbart
Arpita Buesing	Ilyssa Karasik	Perri Ross
Bree Candee	Charul Kothari	Cameron Sager
Catherine	Rachel Lerner	Alicia Scala
Jaime Coffey	Hilary Liebenstein	Patricia Schofield
Debra Cohen	Karen Lin	Ann Sedrish
Meredith Dolgins	Kate Marino	Stacy
Richard Donoghue	Christine Martins	Tina Steinberg
Jody Frieman	Leah Mittelman	Correy Stephenson
Amanda Gitkind	Yvette Montvelisky	Monique Tricario
Lynn Glantz	Nancy Parra	Sara Wolf