



Blind Brook Parent-Teacher Association

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, 17 October 2024 | 7 PM | Blind Brook Middle School/High School Commons

1. Welcome

Blind Brook PTA Co-President Lisa Benoit called the meeting to order at 7:04.

Lisa and Blind Brook PTA Co-President Loren Becher introduced themselves to the group.

2. Superintendent's report, Dr. Colin Byrne

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Colin Byrne reminded everyone of the upcoming bond referendum vote, to be held on Tuesday, 22 October.

A Story Walk has been set up in the Bruno M. Ponterio Ridge Street School courtyard. Visitors are asked to sign up for a tour in advance, since guides will be bringing only a small group through at a time.

Elementary school students will enjoy presentations on klezmer music and Diwali at upcoming assemblies. Dr. Byrne expressed his gratitude to the PTA for their continued support of these programs.

The Board of Education will meet on Wednesday, 23 October, to review the annual audit. There will also be a student presentation on the elementary school courtyard and greenhouse.

The elementary school will host a parade in the morning on Halloween.

Friday, 1 November is a superintendent's conference day, and there will be no school for students.

Dr. Byrne encouraged the community to attend the upcoming PTA-sponsored Fall Fest on Saturday, 26 October.

3. Acceptance of the minutes of the 24 September 2024 meeting

Membership Co-Chair Rachel Boyman made a motion to approve the minutes.

Loren seconded the motion. Motion carried.

4. Co-Presidents' report, Loren Becher and Lisa Benoit

Loren thanked the Programming Committee and the high school and parent volunteers who helped with the World Octopus Day event.

She also thanked the Fundraising Committee for their work organizing Fall Fest, and the many local businesses supporting the event.

Rachel asked how Fall Fest ticket sales were doing; so far there have been more than \$7000 in sales.

Rachel also asked how people can contribute if they are unable to attend. Raffle ticket sales are open and are a great way to support the event without attending.

In the future, the PTA might consider adding more online opportunities, like online bidding for silent auction items, or including ways to donate aside from purchasing event tickets in email communications for the event.

5. Treasurer's report, Taylor Gutierrez

Treasurer Taylor Gutierrez thanked those who had supported the spiritwear sale. Money has also come in from the school supply fundraiser.

In addition, more community members joined the PTA in September, contributing membership dues.

Taylor is working on this year's budget and hopes to have it finalized by the next meeting.

There was a question about the projected delivery date for the spiritwear ordered for this most recent fundraiser. Lisa explained that the order would be going in the following week, and the clothing is expected to arrive in November.

6. Fundraising report, Dea Fisher and Jessica Trosterman

Loren presented the Fundraising Committee report on behalf of Committee Co-Chairs Dea Fisher and Jessica Trosterman.

There are a number of exciting activities planned for Fall Fest, many of which have been listed in emails promoting the event.

The committee is still looking for volunteers to help during the event.

Information about future fundraising events will be announced soon.

7. Programming report, Mary Barbagli and Pamela Huang

Programming Committee Co-Chair Mary Barbagli announced the success of the committee's first event in their new Fun Night series, a celebration of World Octopus Day on Tuesday, 8 October. The event was at capacity, with fifty kindergarten and first-grade students attending, as well as high school student volunteers who facilitated the event.

The event sold out quickly, and feedback about the registration process was discussed. Mary explained that the process begins with an email sent to the families of the targeted audience; in the case of World Octopus Day, kindergarten and first-grade families would have received the email. The event information is then shared on social media and the PTA website.

The Fun Night subcommittee will hold its first meeting next week.

Co-chair Pamela Huang reminded the group that sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade students are invited to participate in the third annual pumpkin carving party on Thursday, 24 October, which is nearing capacity. The committee is partnering with the Village of Rye Brook this year to assist in composting the pumpkin refuse produced at the event.

The committee is planning a World Kindness Day event, either throughout the week of 11 November or on the holiday, Wednesday, 13 November.

The matball tournament which had previously been announced has been moved to the spring.

The annual holiday cookie decorating event is being planned for Thursday, 12 December, for grades 2-5.

Discussion arose about registration for events, particularly those in high demand with limited capacity, as was the case with the Octopus Day event. Mary and Pamela assured the group that they will try some new strategies in the future to see what works best, and that they are learning a lot from the feedback they have received.

8. Liaison reports

a. Elementary School, Afton Rosenfeld and Ann Sedrish

Corresponding Secretary Allison Baumrind delivered the Elementary School liaison report on behalf of Elementary School Liaison to the Principal Ann Sedrish.

Parents are encouraged to register for and attend upcoming Bluebird Parent Chats; the next one will be held on Tuesday, 19 November.

Destination Imagination is in need of volunteer parent coaches. Anyone interested should contact Martha Rosen.

There will be two assemblies this month at the elementary school: a Jewish cultural assembly on Monday, 21 October, with a klezmer music presentation, and another on Tuesday, 29 October, on Diwali.

An email went out earlier in the week on the Story Walk which is set up in the elementary school courtyard.

The bond referendum vote will be held on Tuesday, 22 October, at the elementary school.

The school will hold its Halloween parade around 9 AM on Halloween. Many classes will also be celebrating; all parents participating in these celebrations are reminded that any food to be brought into the classrooms must be cleared by the school nurse by Monday of that week.

There will be no school on Friday, 1 November; teachers will have a superintendent's conference day.

Information on various "bees" (e.g. spelling bee) is forthcoming.

School will be held on Election Day, Tuesday, 5 November; school will be closed the following Monday, 11 November, in observance of Veterans Day.

More information about a program called Creating Connections is forthcoming. In the meantime, if parents are interested in volunteering, they can contact Ann or the PTA co-presidents.

Parent-teacher conferences will be held at the end of November and in early December.

b. Middle School, Leah Mittelman

The Middle School liaison report was delivered on behalf of Leah Mittelman.

Picture day would be held at the middle school the following day, Friday, 18 October.

Red Ribbon Week, an annual campaign to raise awareness about and prevent drug abuse, will take place from 23 to 31 October.

A pumpkin carving party will be held on Thursday, 24 October.

A presentation on internet safety will be made by the Assistant District Attorney to seventh-grade students on Friday, 25 October.

Wednesday, 6 November will mark the end of the first quarter.

Discussion followed on confusion which arose this year for some elementary school families regarding the scheduling of school pictures. The PTA plans to communicate this information differently and more clearly next year.

c. High School, ToniAnne Rigano

High School liaison ToniAnne Rigano announced that picture day at the high school is scheduled for Tuesday, 22 October.

Tenth- and eleventh-grade students will take the PSATs, and twelfth-grade students will take the SATs, on Thursday, 24 October; ninth-graders will participate in a transition bonding day at BOCES.

High School Principal Mark Greenwald and faculty members are focusing on Board of Education initiatives to examine grading practices and institute standards and consistency. This is partially in response to a district-wide survey distributed last year.

Homecoming has been very successful this year, and the homecoming football game is still to come the following day.

Teachers and administrators will conduct “learning walks”, informally spending time in different classrooms, taking a student-centered approach to observe student engagement and to gather ideas from peers.

ToniAnne reported that Middle and High School Student Assistance Counselor Ashley Schlemmer would be entering English Language Arts classes in the coming weeks. Since Ashley was in attendance at the meeting, she explained that this program was part of an eight-lesson series which had previously covered adolescent development, and would next move on to the effects of alcohol and drug use.

ToniAnne reported that a High School Principal Conversation had been held earlier that day.

Mandated safety procedures communication will continue.

The Shared Decision Making Committee members have been finalized; they comprise a mix of students, teachers, and administrators.

d. Pupil Services, Marni Ford

Pupil Services liaison Marni Ford introduced herself; she has taken over the role since Loren stepped up to serve as co-president.

A webinar was held on how executive functioning affects learning.

The next event hosted by Supporting Every Individual Difference (SEID) will be held in November and aims to help parents understand the CSE process.

SEID has been focusing this year on spreading the word about the work that they do and welcoming parents who are interested to engage with their organization.

SEID is also involved with the Homework Helper program, which pairs elementary school students with high school student tutors. There are currently 26 students who have requested a tutor, and 24 of them have been matched with a high school student. A PTA member said that their elementary school student is still waiting to be paired up with a tutor; Loren explained that part of the commitment to running the club is to keep in touch with parents during the matching process, but that efficient communication has been hampered by the program not becoming an official high school-sponsored club. More high school volunteers connected with the organizers at the recent club fair, which will allow them to serve more elementary school students.

9. Membership report, Rachel Boyman and Lindsay Noymer

Membership Co-chair Lindsay Noymer reported that membership has increased since the September meeting, now comprising 537 community members and 127 faculty members.

The co-chairs hope to spearhead a move away from CommunityPass and SchoolBee, and are currently researching other platforms for membership processing and event registration.

Membership co-chair Rachel Boyman encouraged meeting attendees to bolster their research by asking friends in other school districts which platforms they use.

A PTA member asked why they are trying to replace SchoolBee; Lindsay and Rachel explained that the backend is tedious to use, and that the platform doesn't integrate with others. A better platform would allow the PTA to give members different access to events, or send targeted emails to a wider array of groups.

10. New business

Board of Education member Correy Stephenson reminded meeting attendees of the upcoming bond referendum vote; she encouraged anyone with questions to come to her, Dr. Byrne, or any other Board of Education members.

There will be two book fairs held this year: one at the elementary school over the first week of December, overlapping with parent-teacher conferences that week, and another at the middle school sometime in March. Correy will reach out for volunteers to help run the book fairs.

A PTA member asked whether parents would be able to buy books as gifts for teachers and their classrooms; Correy confirmed that they had, in the past, organized a teacher preview, where they could select books, but the onus is on teachers to attend the preview and do so.

11. Next meeting and dates for future meetings

Lisa announced that the PTA would be returning to a schedule which alternates between in-person morning and evening meetings.

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, 14 November, at 9 AM, at the Ridge Street School.

12. Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:06.

Attending

Jessica Andruk
Mary Barbagli
Allison Baumrind
Loren Becher
Rachel Boyman
Lauren Brauntuch
Colin Bryne
Jen Buchwald
Annie Chandrapong
Allison Conte
Marni Ford
Taylor Gutierrez
Pamela Huang
Kerri James
Jenna Laskin
Karen Lin

Amy Nathan
Eneida Nikci
Lindsay Noymer
ToniAnne Rigano
Afton Rosenfeld
Cameron Sager
Ashley Schlemmer
Reva Shapira
Meghan Shaw
Melissa Sheinheit
Shanen Starr
Correy Stephenson
Michelle Tepper
Shari Turner
Erica Wiener
Laura Wolther
Katie Zarkin