



Blind Brook Parent-Teacher Association

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, 20 March 2025 | 9 AM | BMP Ridge Street School Cafetorium

1. Welcome

Blind Brook PTA Co-President Lisa Benoit called the meeting to order at 9:04.

2. Superintendent's report, Dr. Colin Byrne

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Colin Byrne reported that the bond project is underway, beginning with the renovation of the baseball field. Completion of the baseball field is currently scheduled for early May, but the district is hoping it might be finished a bit earlier.

The baseball field is part of the first phase of this project, along with work on the track, pressbox, and a divider in the high school gym.

The next phase comprises work on one of the elementary school fields and the high school air conditioning. There will be temporary air conditioning in place during this phase, as there is a long lead time to fabricate the parts for the new system, and it won't be installed until fall or winter of this year.

The final phase of this bond project, scheduled for summer 2026, comprises renovation of the middle school/high school auditorium, bathrooms, classrooms, and some electrical work.

The budget for next year is almost complete, but currently coming in \$700,000 over the tax cap; the Board of Education is working to bring it in under the cap. A comprehensive budget workshop will be held this coming Saturday beginning at 8:30 AM in the high school library.

The high school musical, *Pippin*, was performed last week.

The fourth-grade circus will be held this coming Friday.

The Destination Imagination talent show will be held on Saturday.

A PTA member asked Dr. Byrne to talk about the cameras which were recently installed on the district's buses. Dr. Byrne explained that there has been a Westchester County initiative to install cameras on school bus stop-arms. The district found out recently that the county would also install cameras inside the buses. The footage is only viewable by the district.

Another PTA member asked whether an upcoming webinar on the dangers of vaping is in response to any particular sense of urgency in the district. Blind Brook Middle and High School

Student Assistance Counselor Ashley Schlemmer clarified that this webinar will be hosted by the organization Parents Against Vaping E-Cigarettes (PAVE) for a broader audience than just our district, and that the webinar was publicized by an email sent by the PTA; it is not a school-sponsored event. Dr. Byrne added that vaping is not considered to be a big problem in the district; there are some incidents, and they are handled according to guidelines set by the school's code of conduct.

3. Special Guest: Ashley Schlemmer, Blind Brook Middle and High School Student Assistance Counselor

Ashley reported that March is Problem Gambling Awareness Month. She described what defines gambling, what distinguishes problem gambling, and shared statistics about gambling among high school students. She also described warning signs that a problem is developing, possible repercussions, and shared some tips for parents to help children avoid developing such problems.

The high school is running a "March Music Madness" song bracket, as an alternative to the NCAA "March Madness" tournament.

Ashley provided literature related to these topics for PTA members.

4. Acceptance of the minutes of the 13 February 2025 meeting

PTA Corresponding Secretary Allison Baumrind made a motion to approve the minutes.

Fundraising Committee Co-Chair Jessica Trosterman seconded the motion. Motion carried.

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

Lisa recognized all of the work that the PTA committees have been doing, particularly the effort put forth by the Membership Committee to identify a new membership platform.

6. Membership Committee report, Rachel Boyman and Lindsay Noymer

Membership Committee Co-Chair Rachel Boyman summarized the work that the Membership Committee has been doing to identify a new fundraising platform for the PTA: they evaluated a number of options, identifying some of our district's unique challenges and needs, and how they would mesh with these platforms.

They have selected Givebacks as the best option. The PTA already uses this platform to pay New York State PTA dues, and piloted its use for fundraising over the course of the school year. The next step is to transition fundraising and event registration from CommunityPass to Givebacks.

Givebacks does not, however, have a membership directory which would be a sufficient replacement for SchoolBee; Rachel and Lindsay hope that might be something that Givebacks will develop in time.

Discussion followed regarding some of the relative merits of Givebacks and SchoolBee, and what a directory transition might look like in the future.

The Membership Committee is also considering a proposal for raising PTA membership dues. Currently, anyone who joins pays \$25 for the year; under the new structure, Blind Brook faculty and staff would continue to pay \$25, and dues for families would increase to \$30 or \$35.

The Membership Committee looked at other Westchester school districts in considering other dues structures and amounts.

So far the consensus among the Executive Board members is to raise dues to \$30.

The Membership Committee's goal is to encourage registration by offering incentives such as early access to programming registration or more raffle tickets at events such as Fall Fest.

PTA Co-President Loren Becher added that this ties in to the shift to Givebacks, which allows the PTA to easily hone its communication to only dues-paying PTA members.

Allison expressed concern that these incentives could negatively affect students by creating a structure where those whose parents are willing or able to pay receive increased access to programming. Rachel agreed, and said that the purpose of this restructure is to drive membership, not fundraise; the Membership Committee is considering how to create an inclusive environment for families experiencing financial hardship.

7. Treasurer's report, Taylor Gutierrez

Loren presented on behalf of PTA Treasurer Taylor Gutierrez. She reported that a check recently written from the PTA had been stolen from the recipient's mailbox, but that the issue has been resolved.

With robust fundraising this year, the PTA has been able to financially support more school events than previously expected.

8. Fundraising Committee report, Dea Fisher and Jessica Trosterman

Jessica shared that the Read-a-Thon has just concluded, and that prizes will be distributed the first week of April through classroom teachers.

In the future, the committee plans to alternate the Read-a-Thon and the Booster-a-Thon each year, at both the elementary school and middle and high school.

The Booster-a-Thon is currently running at the elementary school and will culminate in an in-school glow run on Thursday, 27 March. There are incentives to reach different checkpoints in fundraising, including extra recess for students and "sliming" Principal Tracy Taylor. All students will receive a keychain, pen, and t-shirt.

Based on feedback from past years' events, the Harlem Wizards will come to Blind Brook on a Friday night this year, 16 May. Tickets will go on sale Wednesday, 2 April. Adult volunteers will receive a complimentary ticket for themselves.

Students will be dismissed early on Friday, 25 April, and Thursday, 1 May for parent-teacher conferences. The Fundraising Committee will be offering events in the afternoon on these days, and will try a new approach to increase the number of students who can be accommodated at each.

The committee is also considering enlisting the help of parents to help organize and run events.

9. Programming Committee report, Mary Barbagli and Pamela Huang

Programming Committee Co-Chair Pamela Huang reported that there are a number of exciting upcoming events.

The PTA will hold its first adults-only event on Thursday, 27 March, with Dr. Pooja Singh presenting on women's health.

An intergenerational game night will be held on Monday, 31 March, in partnership with the Rye Brook Senior Center. This is the first PTA event organized for high school students; middle school students are also invited.

A matball tournament will be run by the high school physical education department on Thursday, 24 April, for sixth- and seventh-grade students in the middle school/high school gyms.

Another Fun Night event is planned for Tuesday, 29 April, for first-, second-, and third-graders. The event will be an indoor pajama party game night in the elementary school gym. The Programming Committee is looking for volunteers to run game stations and families willing to lend games to the event.

The elementary school Multicultural Festival is planned for Friday, 9 May.

10. Liaison reports

a. Elementary School, Afton Rosenfeld and Ann Sedrish

PTA Elementary School Liaison to Class Parents Afton Rosenfeld reported that preparation for Teacher Appreciation Week in May is underway. There was further discussion about how the PTA would communicate guidelines to class parents for anything they might coordinate with the families in their class.

PTA Elementary School Liaison to the Principal Ann Sedrish reported that Booster-a-Thon activities had begun for students the previous day.

A Bluebird Chat will be held Wednesday, 2 April.

The fourth-grade circus event will be held this coming Friday..

Ann reminded the group that end-of-year grade-level activities are on the district calendar.

b. Middle School, Leah Mittelman

PTA Middle School Liaison Leah Mittelman reported that incoming sixth-grade families will be meeting later this evening.

There will be daily activities the following week for Wellness Week.

Eighth-graders will take the National Spanish and Italian exams in April.

The middle school thanks the PTA for sponsoring the book fair which will be held there Thursday and Friday, 27 and 28 March.

Incoming seventh-grade families will meet on Thursday, 3 April.

Seventh graders will attend a historic character performance by Sheila Arnold on Monday, 7 April.

State testing will be held in May.

c. High School, ToniAnne Rigano

Lisa said that due to a technical error she was unable to access PTA High School Liaison ToniAnne Rigano's report, but that the PTA is working on more ways to support the high school community, including a campus beautification project, and serving ice cream on the last day of school.

A written copy of the report is appended to the end of these minutes.

d. Pupil Services, Marni Ford and Sarah Shiboski

Lisa reported on behalf of the PTA Pupil Services Liaisons.

At recent professional development sessions, Dr. Chad Brice conducted a DBT training session for teachers. Teachers also worked with Mike McLeod, who led additional parent sessions: there was a great parent turnout with positive feedback, and more sessions will be scheduled, hopefully three before the end of the school year.

Karen Vitti and Jennifer Castelli, Director and Assistant Director of Pupil Personnel Services, presented at a Board of Education meeting earlier in the month. They hope to schedule a presentation in the spring on ICT for the general community.

A middle school special education teacher will be replaced with a psychologist, based on the needs of students.

11. Next meeting and future meeting dates

The next PTA meeting will be held on Thursday, 10 April, at 7 PM.

The May meeting will be shifted to an evening Zoom meeting.

12. Other business

Pamela added that a potluck event for middle and high school students is scheduled for Monday, 28 April.

Leah reported that four entries from Blind Brook students earned awards of merit in the New York State PTA Reflections contest, and will move on to the national competition.

13. Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:17.

Attending

Felicia Albano
Allison Baumrind
Loren Becher
Lisa Benoit
Rachel Boyman
Pamela Huang
Leah Mittelman
Lauren Posner
Angela Rein
Afton Rosenfeld
Ashley Schlemmer
Ann Sedrish
Melissa Sheinheit
Correy Stephenson

Blind Brook High School PTA Liaison Report
March 2025

Scheduling for next year is ongoing. Counselors have met with all students regarding their course selections. The next step in the process is to see how many sections each course will require and that will be relayed to each department coordinator.

The spring musical, Pippin, was last weekend. It was a great show and everyone had a fabulous performance.

There will be a SUNY College Fair for juniors and seniors featuring 40 SUNY schools on March 26th.

The formerly announced S.P.I.R.I.T. program has been canceled by the Department of Justice as they are no longer offering the program.

Mr. Greenwald's school beautification project is underway. Large picture frames have been ordered to display student artwork and photography. He thanks the PTA for the funding.

Learning Walks by administrators will continue through April.

Band and Chorus are taking a trip to Universal Studios in Orlando, FL.

The Spring Pep Rally will be on April 4th.

Model UN will have a trip to Boston the first week of April.

3 quarter ends on April 7th.