



## **Blind Brook Parent-Teacher Association**

### **Meeting Minutes**

Thursday, 15 May 2025 | 9 AM | Zoom

#### **1. Welcome**

Blind Brook PTA Co-President Loren Becher called the meeting to order at 9:03 AM.

This meeting pilots a remote meeting format via Zoom. If there is largely positive feedback, there may be more meetings held remotely next year.

#### **2. Vote on proposal to increase member dues**

Membership was asked to consider a proposal to raise annual PTA dues from \$25 per family to \$30. Dues for school faculty and staff will remain at \$25.

The National PTA raised their dues rate to \$3.25 per member beginning 1 July 2025.

The proposed Blind Brook PTA dues increase offsets this national increase, and also supports the organization's mission to support increased opportunities for all students across all three schools in the district.

Loren asked all members present to send her a direct message via Zoom's chat feature with their vote.

#### **3. Superintendent's report, Dr. Colin Byrne**

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Colin Byrne reminded attendees that the community would vote on the proposed school budget for next year on Tuesday, 20 May. A board member election will also be held. Polls will be open from 7 AM to 9 PM at the Bruno M. Ponterio Ridge Street School.

Dr. Byrne reported that the New York State budget had recently passed, as had Governor Kathy Hochul's proposed legislation to ban the use of smartphones and other internet-enabled personal devices by students at school during the school day. The ban requires schools to provide adequate storage for these devices to students from kindergarten to twelfth grade, and a clear way for caregivers to reach students during the school day. The district is working on a plan and will share it at an upcoming school board meeting once there is a draft.

Creaticon will be held later in the evening, from 5 to 8 PM at the middle school/high school. The event is an opportunity to highlight the creative work of students throughout all grade levels.

The fourth- and fifth-grade band's spring concert will be held on Wednesday, 21 May, in the elementary school cafetorium. The Science Research Symposium will also be held that day at the middle school/high school.

The middle school musical, *Once Upon a Mattress*, will have performances on Friday, 30 May, at 7 PM, and on Saturday, 31 May, at noon and 4 PM. Tickets will go on sale soon.

PTA Elementary School Liaison Ann Sedrish asked whether the new policy banning internet-enabled devices will be specific as to which wearable devices it applies. Dr. Byrne clarified that most will be banned, but that the policy will be as specific as possible, acknowledging that the list will continue to grow.

Before moving on to the next agenda item, Loren announced that she had counted the votes and that the proposed membership dues increase had passed.

**4. Acceptance of the minutes of the 10 April 2025 meeting**

Ann made a motion to approve the minutes.

Programming Committee Co-Chair Pamela Huang seconded the motion. Motion carried.

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

PTA Co-President Lisa Benoit celebrated the great year that the PTA has had. An email will be sent to the community to highlight some of the initiatives that the PTA has supported this year; Lisa listed many of those highlights.

**6. Treasurer's report, Taylor Gutierrez**

Loren delivered the Treasurer's report on behalf of PTA Treasurer Taylor Gutierrez.

Most of the PTA's revenue in April came from the Booster-a-Thon fundraiser.

Last month's expenses included supplies for the elementary school's garden, and supplies to complete the high school hallway beautification project.

Lisa commended Taylor for her work this year, and keeping projects within budget.

**7. Membership Committee report, Rachel Boyman and Lindsay Noymer**

Membership Committee Co-Chair Rachel Boyman reiterated that the most important item for the committee this month was the proposal to raise annual dues.

She also reported that the committee has been happy with their transition to the Givebacks platform. Rachel has spoken with a Senior Product Manager at Givebacks regarding the future of the platform's directory feature. She has been assured that they hope to develop it further down the line. Rachel explained that though the directory is a selling point for our membership, most

platforms don't invest as much into these features because they don't bring in revenue the way fundraising functionality does (most take a percentage of funds raised as their fee). Rachel reiterated that, though the committee will continue to find the best directory solution for the community, the directory is a value-add for PTA membership, and not the reason to join.

The committee is working on messaging to be distributed over the summer to drive fall membership.

Discussion followed regarding the possibility of introducing a "class dues" type of contribution for middle and high school families. There was clarification of what elementary school class dues support, i.e. class parties, and what PTA funds support, and different ways that upper school family engagement with PTA membership, fundraising, and programming might be increased. Lisa also clarified that there are conversations happening behind the scenes between PTA executive board leadership and the many fundraising groups at the upper school to coordinate and differentiate efforts, to help everyone succeed in their mission.

#### **8. Fundraising Committee report, Dea Fisher and Jessica Trosterman**

Fundraising Committee Co-Chair Dea Fisher said that the committee is considering bringing on more members to help lighten the lift on delivering fundraising opportunities next year.

They will also be looking at how groups at the upper school and in the wider community fundraise.

In particular for the fall they are planning to make changes to afterschool programming.

Co-Chair Jessica Trosterman reminded the group that the Harlem Wizards event will be held in the high school gym the following day, Friday, 16 May; the event has been sold out.

The new school swag store is still open, and the committee welcomes feedback on the redesign.

Lisa highlighted a question in the chat regarding the plant sale. Jess confirmed that the plant sale will not be held this year. Dea added that the committee plans to survey the community in the coming weeks to help inform which fundraisers might be run next year.

#### **9. Programming Committee report, Mary Barbagli and Pamela Huang**

Pamela reported that a Matball Tournament for sixth- and seventh-graders was held on Thursday, 24 April, and thanked the school's physical education department for running the event. Turnout was excellent, with about 70 students attending.

A pajama game night was held on Tuesday, 29 April, for students in first, second, and third grade; about forty-three students attended. Pam thanked the community members who volunteered at the event and who lent games to be used. This was the final Fun Night event for the year, and Pamela thanked the subcommittee members for all of their work this year.

The second annual Multicultural Festival was held on Friday, 9 May, in the elementary school cafetorium. Nearly 500 people attended. Fifty families volunteered to represent twenty-three different cultures. There were also performances by the fifth grade band, second grade singers, and representatives of Indian and Uzbek cultures. Pamela emphasized that their vision is for this event to engage the wider community, and not just families within the school.

She also commended the Teacher Appreciation Week Committee for finding generous community partners, and managing the budget so well this year.

Co-Chair Mary Barbagli echoed Pamela in recognizing the Teacher Appreciation Week Committee, and noted that they accomplished ambitious plans within a tight timeline.

Recognizing that May is a busy month for members of the school community, the second HealthTalk event with Dr. Pooja Singh focusing on preventative care was rescheduled for Wednesday, 11 June, from 6 to 7 PM, in the elementary school cafetorium. This event is open to adults throughout the community.

The Olympic Night event for fourth- and fifth-graders is scheduled for Thursday, 22 May, from 6:45 to 8:15 PM. It will be facilitated by NeverStopMoving365. Mary noted that the event is nearly sold out, and that they are working with the gym's capacity in capping attendance at 100 students. This will be the committee's last major program for the year.

The committee plans to survey the community at the end of the month, and share their findings at the June PTA meeting.

## **10. Liaison reports**

### **a. Elementary School, Afton Rosenfeld and Ann Sedrish**

Ann passed along a request from Elementary School Principal Tracy Taylor that parents review the weekly highlights email sent by the school, and the school calendar on the district's website for important dates.

The elementary school will dismiss students early, at 11:30 AM, on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday the last week of school, 23, 24, and 25 June.

There will be no school on Memorial Day, Monday, 26 May, or the preceding Friday, 23 May. School will also be closed Thursday, 19 June, in observance of Juneteenth.

There will be no Bluebird Chats held in May or June.

All schools will hold their graduation ceremonies on Tuesday, 24 June, at Purchase College, SUNY, including the fifth grade. Their ceremony will be one hour long. Tickets will be available in June; the ceremony will also be live-streamed online.

As mentioned by the Fundraising team, the Harlem Wizards event will be held Friday, 16 May. Earlier in the evening, from 5 to 7 PM, students in Ms. Fisher and Ms. Marvin's first-grade class will have a "sleep under" party at the school.

The fifth grade's Night of Music will be held on Friday, 13 June.

The fourth- and fifth-grade band's spring concert will be held on Wednesday, 21 May.

A number of elementary school staff members will retire this year. Notes sent to Ms. Taylor by Thursday, 10 June, will be passed along to those staff members. The school will recognize their departure at a celebration in June.

Elementary School Liaison to Class Parents Afton Rosenfeld recognized the great work of the class parents this year, particularly their recent efforts during Teacher Appreciation Week.

Guidelines for end-of-year gifts will be distributed soon.

Class parents applications for next year will be out in August.

Afton plans to consider new ideas for the class parent structure for next year.

**b. Middle School, Leah Mittelman**

Middle School Liaison Leah Mittelman passed along the school's thanks for the PTA-sponsored ice cream truck which visited following state assessments.

There are a number of middle school field trips scheduled for the end of the year.

Fourth quarter progress reports will come out on Friday, 16 May.

Leah reiterated, as Dr. Byrne had announced, that the middle school will perform a musical at the end of the month.

Middle school band concerts are on the calendar.

The eighth-grade Earth Science Regents Exam Practical will be held on Friday, 13 June.

The last full day of classes at the middle school will be Monday, 16 June.

Leah recommended Middle School Principal Seth Horowitz's informative weekly email for additional information.

**c. High School, ToniAnne Rigano**

Loren delivered the high school report on behalf of High School Liaison ToniAnne Rigano.

Loren reiterated that Creaticon will be held later in the evening.

The Save a Life distracted driving simulations will be given to students on Friday, 16 May.

The Board of Education's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee will meet on Monday, 19 May.

The Science Research Symposium will be held on Wednesday, 21 May.

The high school thanks the PTA for funding the purchase of picture frames to display student art in the school's hallways as part of the School Beautification Initiative.

The Advanced Placement testing period will end tomorrow.

A number of celebratory events for the high school seniors are scheduled in the coming weeks.

**d. Pupil Services, Marni Ford and Sarah Shiboski**

Loren reported on behalf of the Pupil Services liaisons that registration is still open on Givebacks for the upcoming parenting workshop on Monday, 19 May, led by Mike McLeod.

**11. Next meeting and future meeting dates**

The Zoom platform seems to have been successful for this meeting, and may be used for some meetings next year.

**12. Adjournment**

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:04 AM.

**Attending**

Mary Barbagli  
Allison Baumrind  
Loren Becher  
Lisa Benoit  
Ashley Berman  
Rachel Boyman  
Aneta Brzova

Jen Buchwald  
Colin Byrne  
Allison Conte  
Lauren Feist  
Marcy Ferdschneider  
Dea Fischer  
Marni Ford  
Taylor Gutierrez  
Pamela Huang  
Karen Lin  
Leah Mittelman  
Alexandra Patchen  
Lauren Posner  
Afton Rosenfeld  
Ashley Schlemmer  
Ann Sedrish  
Melissa Sheinheit  
Correy Stephenson  
Michelle Tepper  
Shari Turner  
Lauren Watt  
Emily Weinstein Mahoney  
Laura Wolther