

Bigelow PTO Meeting Minutes

January 4, 2013 8:30-9:45am

Present: Todd Harrison, Becky Manley, Mindy Peckler, Ted Everett, Julie Burgoin, Beth Coomber, Leslie Williams, Sally Brickell, Angela Pitter-Wright, Jen Borhegyi, Gary Bagnall, Andrea Newman, Kim Buckton, Miriam Alandydy, Leah Arteaga, Anna LeBlanc, Marina Kuitnitsky

-Vote on Minutes: accepted.

- Officer Reports

- School Directories are in Home Base today and will be distributed to students. Check your child's backpack and spread the word. Thank you to Beth Coomber! Directories took longer this year because of system input.

- Bigelow Store is up and running. Sweatshirts and other gear are available through Cafe Press.

-One Book, One School. This program takes place every fall at the high schools. There's a discussion now about bringing it to middle schools, collaborating with Creative Arts and Sciences, bringing an author in as guest speaker. This brings unity to students and staff by everyone reading the same book over the summer. There are adaptations for different learning styles. It is a big project for the staff.

-Ted distributed the Pro Forma financial statement as of Dec 31, 2012. Financially we are doing well. Ahead of budget, but expenses have not started yet. Bake sale proceeds were a Bigelow school record! We may have 2 more bake sales if there are more elections. The donation drive is behind budget but the push for this comes later in the year. Magazine drive number of \$5300 is not final, still need to pay for student prizes. The 8th grade fundraiser is ahead of budget and includes proceeds from the Car Wash and Turkey Bowl. There is a \$1399 carryover from last year. We have 25K in savings and 7K in checking.

-Principal's Report

Re: One Book, One School: Teachers are excited about it. The trick is finding a title appropriate for the whole school in terms of theme and reading level. One idea is *Wonder*. Possibly could tie in with an author visit. A committee will plan for this. Possibly an activity for every other year. It takes lots of planning, but the infrastructure is in place with existing Community Block time. At Newton North the project was labor intensive, but this year it was less elaborate and therefore less time-consuming. At the Elementary level, Understanding Our Differences created a curriculum around *Wonder* and could share it. This program does not replace existing summer reading.

-Security is on the top of everyone's mind. Whole school system is working together on this and in conjunction with the police. Considering a buzzer system for the front door. There are new visitor stickers and signs around the building. Staff have security badges.

-There will be a lockdown drill in January for students to practice the procedure. There will be an explanation in Home Base and Todd will send a letter out to parents. It is a little frightening, but needs to be practiced so kids will know what to do without panic. There will be extra prep for kids known to be vulnerable. There's a script/protocol for teachers.

-Todd reports that it's unnerving that the school in Newton, CT had good precautions. Todd's approach is to know the population, and to be aware of potential problems. The district policy is to lock all school doors except the front door after 8:30am. There are financial considerations to safety improvements, but it is the right thing to do. There are currently push-button locks and window shades in every classroom. After the Newtown tragedy, Bigelow guidance counselors have been "on-call" and some classes wrote letters and there have been moments of silence at school. There were discussions in home base. Parents have let staff know if their child needs extra attention. Todd and staff are keeping an eye on it.

Upcoming Events:

- Geography Bee next week

- Winter concerts

- Feb. 13th Bigelow is hosting Instructional Rounds: intensive visits by some 50 administrators who will observe in classrooms and give feedback on students' "thinking skills" --- evidence of thinking out loud, asking thought-provoking questions and making sure they're getting practice at this. Todd will send a letter to parents about it. These visits allow for more consistency across schools and give Bigelow helpful feedback. We are the last school to do this - the other middle schools have already participated.

- Creative Arts and Sciences (CASC) report: Mindy

She works with Karen Kimball who does all the admin. Mindy attends because not all performers have been CORI-ed. Theatre Espresso came for the 8th grade and adapted the program that morning because of the Newtown events. The program was about the Trial for the Boston Massacre - the kids were the jury and had great participation. Grade 7 will have a program in January. There aren't as many options for 6th grade, but they are pushing for more options, including looking for an author now. They did have a music program earlier this year. All the kids really enjoy these interactive programs.

- Magazine Drive was successful. The launch, timing and prizes all worked and the kids were engaged. There were lots of online orders.

- Cyndi Dailey-Smith Scholarship Fund. Let Becky know if there are there companies we could reach out to for sponsorship, or if anyone has ideas. It's in the first year and is kind of slow going. We are hoping it will be long-term-- more involvement is needed. There are brochures and info on the website.

-Bigelow Big Night is Sat. Feb. 9th at the Crowne Plaza. This is Bigelow's biggest fundraiser. Silent auction, food and music. Volunteers are needed. Let Becky or Andrea Newman know if you can help. Donation forms and letters were distributed. Last year netted 13K. We are hoping for 10K this year but could really use 15K. The library could use 15 new Mac Book computers (each costs around 1K). Now less than half a class can use computers when they come to the library. It would be nice to help the library finish the computer lab. NB: The city is NOT paying for any technology and will not be for the foreseeable future. It's confusing because the NSF sends solicitations mentioning technology funding.

Q: Which items raise the most money in the silent auction? A: Sports and concert tickets, cocktail parties/dinners, hosted or delivered. Birthday parties, vacation homes, sports memorabilia. Becky has a master list of local businesses asking for donations and letters have gone out. We can always use more volunteers to round up donations.

We need people to work at check-out on the night of the event.

There is no online auction this year. Bidding For Good is all set up but we would need a point person to oversee it, and all of the items ahead of time. It charges a flat fee plus a percentage, so not clear it would raise much extra money.

Bigelow staff have been invited -- we ask for some contribution -- and/or it could also be another check-box on the form to sponsor the admission of staff/teacher to attend the event.

Admission will be \$30-35 this year. There is an early bird rate. This just covers costs of music, food, etc. We hope if people can contribute more they will do so in the auction.

Last year 150 people attended.

A sign-up sheet was passed for volunteers.

- New Business

Override will be March 12. Angela reports the operating piece impacts ALL schools and covers the higher enrollment costs in Newton. We need all parents and neighbors to support the override. There are 3 separate questions but one city. Angela passed around a sign-up sheet for supporters to sign and indicate if they could hold a coffee, write a letter to the Editor, hold a sign or put a sign on their lawn. School liaisons are still needed at Bigelow (Marina?) Underwood, Ward.

Go to the City of Newton website for more info.

Q: How are people feeling about the override? A: Much better than last override. If you do the calculation it's not as much money as you might think. Something like 50 cents per 1K property valuation. The group leading the effort is a separate organization: Building Newton's Future (buildingnewtonsfuture.org). The folks who led the opposition to the last override are on board this time.

Angela will send Beth some info to put in the newsletter. Also will list the link to city of Newton website where Setti Warren describes the override. We can put same info in our newsletter as what Sally did for Newton North. There is also a Facebook page for supporters.

Q: Do PTOs endorse overrides or not? Angela: Yes, the PTO can take a position. Becky will check to see what a quorum is. Cabot PTO has endorsed it.

NB: The override also supports the fire and police departments. Great schools = high property values.

- Announcements

Sally: Newton North is hosting its 3rd Expo Jan. 29th 5-7:30pm: Just Think: Teens Making Smart Choices. There will be a variety of health and wellness exhibitors, info about summer programs for teens, etc.

- Please get things to Beth by Friday for the newsletter that goes out Sunday nights.

Next meeting March 1, 2013, 8:30-9:45am.