

## **Bigelow PTO Meeting Minutes** March 1, 2013

Present: Todd Harrison, Becky Manley, Ted Everett, Leslie Williams, Debbie Slater, Sally Brickell, Mindy Peckler, Anna LeBlanc, Heather Mehra, KB Spector, Beth Coomber, Kim Buckton, Marina Kvitnitsky

Meeting came to order at 8:37am  
Minutes reviewed and approved.

**Treasurer's Report.** Ted distributed a financial statement as of February 2013. He says we are in good shape financially. CASP payments are up-to-date. NB: We are below our donation drive number. Do we have a push later in the year to bring that number up? Becky: it will happen after the Big Night is over.

**Dues.** We have never had dues. A lot of schools have dues in order to get the directory. Sally: At Newton North it is \$40. Each year it brings in \$30-40K. Maybe 40 percent of the school participates. No question people can have directories if there's a financial hardship. Sally will show us the flyer North uses. Todd: we once had dues tied to the directory, but we decided we wanted everyone to have the directory and to ask for general donations instead. KB: We need to make a small ask because it encourages people to participate and it might not occur to them otherwise. Becky: we got donations with the library video, and did an email ask over the holidays. We could ask for "suggested" dues and give three bullet points of what that includes: the directory and other PTO efforts. The directory pays for itself with advertising. We can send a paper letter (after Big Night) asking for donations. It is a new tax year, so people may wish to make gifts now.

**Big Night.** We are ahead of expenses in ticket sales. Please let Becky know if you bought tickets for the old date but can't come so your dinner won't have to be paid for. We have \$500 donations from people who can't come but wanted to donate. Todd: Thank you PTO for cancelling due to the blizzard; it was the right call. It is tomorrow night: all is ready to go and it should be a lot of fun. We hope to meet the 10K goal with ticket sales and auction proceeds.

### **Principal's Report.**

On Wednesday we had Rounds, a program through NPS, in which all administrators are welcome to tour the school. There were 48 visitors in classes for two morning periods. Faculty were asking for feedback on *thinking* in classrooms. Are we meeting the whole range of thinking skills? Meeting next week will collate feedback and share with faculty. The visitors said it's a great group of kids. They are comfortable, happy, on task, respectful. Solid across the board. Also noticed the diversity in the school. More so than other Newton Schools. Kids did great thinking in the classroom. Very engaged. Kids running discussions, thinking deeply about science experiments, having debates about the rain forest, problem solving in math class. Making thinking visible is an ongoing instructional issue. We continue to promote high-level

thinking in class.

Security. Great feedback from parents about front-door only access. Todd sent an early February email about locking side door in morning. We will have buzzer/camera installed before April vacation. Gives principal and assistants a chance to welcome kids and eyeball everything that's coming through the front door. Can see quickly if anyone is distressed. A couple of outliers didn't like the proposal. One parent said the front steps are in bad condition. (Will be replaced in summer 2014). Another was concerned the security plan could produce more anxiety in the kids. Todd appreciates these perspectives but says in the long run kids will feel more comfortable knowing a plan is in place; it will become routine. The only delay now is working out the traffic pattern. Blue zone may shift. Buses can complicate drop off on Vernon St. Some parents want to see the child walk into the school building. Currently the drop off by the parking lot is unsafe anyway. Some parents drop off in the middle of the street. Pick up will stay the same as it is now. KB Spector has observed pick and drop off for 15 days on Tuesdays (see below). Pick up is worse than drop off. Morning is more spread out. The crush comes at 2:45. Maybe a police officer will be there to remind parents of procedure. Snow makes it more difficult. We need more enforcement out there. Todd is out there when he can be. After new system is in place we will educate parents. We reviewed lockdown procedure with kids on Tuesday. Drill will take place soon. Email will be sent to all parents after the drill takes place. Talking about doing it twice a year.

**Traffic.** KB Spector recently joined the Traffic Council looking at safety in the intersection at Vernon and Park streets. Two months ago KB saw a child almost be hit in the middle of the street. The "bump out" curbs had been put in place to appease neighbors to slow speed on Vernon St. and has been a traffic calming measure. Snowplows took the bumper away. Then traffic flowed nicely. Safe Routes for School (Alicia Bowman) wants a bigger, redesigned bumper to resolve pedestrian safety, BUT would squeeze that corner down to one lane. It will have a huge bottleneck effect. Maybe Patrick Baxter, the traffic engineer, could come and hear our feedback. Safe Routes also wants to change some of the directionals, and to limit the left turn onto Vernon St. during school hours, and to limit the right turn onto Vernon from Park St. This directly conflicts with our new school entry procedures. The Traffic Council did not know about our new entry procedures. If these proposals go to Traffic Council they will likely be passed, unless people complain about it. We need to send an email to parents letting them know about this, and get in touch with Alderman Scott Lennon and Alderman Ciccone. The bump out would be constructed by the city as directed by Scott Lennon after the Traffic Council makes the decision. The Traffic Council meets 3-6 months after an item is docketed, but KB does not want the item to be docketed without having PTO voices heard. Sally will tell Alicia that people at Bigelow are concerned.

Other points: Neighbors are trying to get a stop sign for northbound travelers, but that requires state approval. Scott Lennon took elevated crosswalks off the table because it requires state approval.

What about a crossing guard? They are paid for by the city.

Our alderman was told by the Newton police that we have 3 crossing guards. Only Day Middle School has a crossing guard to cross Walnut St. Underwood has lots of crossing guards. They are here already for Underwood - could they just be here 15 minutes earlier?

**ACTION ITEMS:** Becky will craft an email and KB will review it for facts. A letter will be drafted from the School Council to the Traffic Council. Todd will call Alicia Bowman.

**CASP update.** Mindy. CASP going really well. A couple more programs this year. Caren Kimball, who has been running this, might have found someone to replace her next year. 8th grade performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is next week.

**Fundraising.** All grades are selling cookie dough. Packets went home. Reminder from PTO: ask your child about it. Proceeds go to Scholarship Fund for field trips for all grades. We are ahead of 8th grade graduation fundraising goal.

**Big Night.** Tomorrow night. All is looking good. 125 tickets sold. A great auction- 100 items. Great band. Food stations. Not too late to buy a ticket. Visa MC AmEx checks accepted.

**Override March 12.** Marina. Lots of campaigning on both sides of the issue. If you're willing to work for it, please let Marina know. There is a coffee on March 12 at Ellen Gibson's house: Scott Lennon and Geoff Epstein will be there. Sign up to help with the Election Day Bake Sale. April 30th is primary for US Senate Race. Monday, June 24th is last day of school right now.

**Last PTO meeting May 30th.** Becky: People have missed having a speaker at PTO meeting. Are there topics you're interested in? Becky will send a Survey Monkey about topics. Positive body image? Teen depression? Todd: Rob Evans at HRA in Wellesley spoke recently about raising resilient children. It was noted that we should avoid having same speakers as other area schools. Becky: hard to get PTOs to collaborate. But when Anthony Wolf was here in the fall it was well-attended by people from all over Newton. One of the few events that worked this well. PTO Council should coordinate guest speakers. Beth: PTO Council has have some money left over that could be used for speakers? Next year better collaboration with other middle schools.

**One Book One School.** Todd: Committee formed, led by Ellen Gibson and Patty Summa, Librarian. Not *Wonder* -- it has already been read in many of the 5th grades. Theme will be around kindness and middle school values. Teacher stipend this summer to put together follow-up activities for students and parents. An exhibit at school about the book will carry through the whole school year. They will put together rough proposal for faculty and parents. Program in place by June 1st. Have to have the book in the next couple of months to tie it in for CASP. They will get some student input on the book. One book mentioned was *Out of My Mind*.

Adjournment 9:45am