

Bigelow Middle School PTO Meeting
February 25, 2015 @ 8:30 a.m.
Bigelow Learning Commons

Attendees:

David Fleishman, Newton Superintendent of Schools
Ruth Goldman, School Committee
Diana Fisher Gomberg, School Committee
Angela Pitter-Wright, School Committee
Jacquie Arbuckle, PTO Co-president
Carolyn Judge, PTO Co-president
Vicki Spetter, PTO Co-treasurer
Vicki Ritterband, PTO Secretary
Susan Donnellan
Tami Ireland
Karen Manning
Miriam Alandydy
Alison McDonough

1. Mark your calendars

NewtonServes, Sunday, April 26 – We’re focusing on plantings in the front entrance, thus we’re dubbing the project “Bigelow Big Dig.” Two Bigelow dads are heading up the efforts and will be looking for volunteers.

Bigelow’s Big Night, May 9: This year’s theme is Hot Night in Havana and it will be held under a tent at Commander’s Mansion in Watertown. This is our largest fundraiser of the year and we’re counting on raising at least \$10,000. It’s an evening of food, drinks, entertainment and bidding on auction items. We’re hoping to collect 100 auction items so if you can solicit a business or donate an item or service, let us know.

2. The 2014-2015 PTO budget of \$34,200 was approved. The two largest budget items are Creative Arts and Sciences (\$10,000) and landscaping for the renovated main entrance and the nearby traffic island that the school has “adopted” (also \$10,000.) \$5,000 will be allotted to technology, mostly accessories like memory cards and cameras.

Last year we had a budget surplus of \$13,000, which we’ll spend this year.

3. Updates from the School Committee:

Angela Pitter-Wright: The school committee generally meets on Monday or Thursday nights at 7 p.m. and the meetings are broadcast on NewTV. Contact us any time at schoolcommittee@newton.k12.ma.us.

Diana Fisher Gomberg: This year, we've have been focusing a lot on upgrading facilities. Our enrollment has increased by 1,200 students in the last 10 years. We've added space in nooks and crannies, put on additions and are slated to rebuild several schools. When the Day Middle School addition was constructed, it allowed all of Cabot to attend the same middle school (before some Day students attended Bigelow.)

Angier is currently being rebuilt and is slated to be finished in less than a year. Zervas will be next and then Cabot.

Ruth Goldman: The school committee and school staff have been working on reorganizing student assignments, thanks to the fact that Zervas will be able to accommodate more students once it is rebuilt. The hope is that the redistricting will affect future students, not current ones.

3. Superintendent David Fleishman Update

- In the last year, the schools have emphasized improving how they **emotionally support students**, particularly in the middle schools. **Beefing up technology in the middle schools** has been another priority.
- **Goodbye MCAS, Hello PARCC** (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers)

After 16 years of MCAS, students in grades 3-8 will be taking the PARCC test instead of MCAS this spring. With the adoption of the Common Core State Standards in 2011, MCAS was thought to no longer adequately assess the curriculum Newton teaches. PARCC differs from MCAS in that the writing sections are more rigorous and it assesses critical thinking skills more than simply subject matter — MCAS's orientation.

Testing sessions are shorter than with MCAS and they will be spread out over 9 days. Because of all the snow days (six so far), the testing will be moved back a week.