



PTO WINTER Meeting MINUTES

January 22, 2019, 7-8:30pm

Bigelow Library

Attendees: Jessica Gilmartin (Co-President), Jennifer Weber (Co-President), Una Simmons (VP of Fundraising), Todd Harrison (Bigelow Principal), David Fleishman (NPS Superintendent), Miranda Alandydy (Co-Treasurer), Kara Peterson (Co-Secretary), Bridget Ray-Canada (School Committee), Anping Shen (School Committee), Steven Siegel (School Committee).

1. Welcome and Introduction Todd Harrison thanked everyone for coming. Participants introduced themselves.
2. Anping Shen, from the school committee explained the work of the committee and how it is structured. Explained how they work with the Superintendent and School Committee. Mentioned that their meetings are recorded and also that people can attend in person. Their website has the calendar and the next meeting is Jan 28 @ 7 pm. Can always contact by email.

Two new things this past year:

- a. School Committee Newsletter
- b. Virtual Office Hours – Facebook Live – NPS Facebook
Feb 10, March 24, April 28, June 2. Viewership live and post-event is strong.
3. Bridget Ray-Canada, from the school committee talked about demographic trends. Building projects moving along well. Angier done 2017, Zervas, Cabot on schedule sept 2019. There will be a preschool at 150 Jackson Road. Horace Mann will move to Carr School.
 - a. Some discussion about how firm the plans are and what the final logistics will be. Also people asking what exactly we purchased regarding the Jackson School.
 - b. Some of the other schools are old and will take time to address.
 - c. There are things that are still fluid but we are in much better shape now than we were ten years ago.
 - d. Feedback is always welcome on where we are
4. Steven Siegel, from school committee.
 - a. 10 years ago started full day kindergarten working group. Will be leaving the hybrid system (we are the last community in MA to be doing this). Additional time will not be in classroom time per se, more in social and emotional development.



- b. High school start time. Talked about for many years. Newton South did a lot of research and research shows that later start time is beneficial for health. Very complicated logistics and conversations. Impacts the bus and associated costs. Also impacts road congestion. Maybe an answer is to also move elementary and middle school as well. They know it is moving slowly but getting community buy-in is crucial.
 - c. Also looking at high school schedule, number of classes/length. This can positively impact homework and social/emotional development. Looking at the time blocks at the end of the day to be more flex time
 - d. Transportation working group. It is estimated that 40% of Newton's traffic is school-related traffic. Get more students to walk, bike, and take the bus. Lots of entities around town are working on this. PTOs, NPS, Safe Routes to School, City Council, etc. etc. Looking at Blue Zones and do they really help.
5. Mr. Fleishman asked if there are any questions.
- a. Kara asked if electronic school are on the horizon in Newton. They are not at the moment.
 - b. Came up that the bus pass is not worth it because anyone who plays sports cannot use the late bus. The question is should be a half day ticket or something or can we perhaps get a later pick up.
 - c. Could we have a shuttle type bus that loops similar to what the colleges do?
 - d. How involved is the city in these discussions? The city is working on the Complete Street Initiative.
 - e. The question is can the City do more to get the public transportation to be in service of the schools? It is a city and a school problem.
 - f. There is a tension between buying new busses and the cost. The fees don't cover the costs. Each bus (even when full) only recovers about 30% of the cost.
6. Jessica asked about the changing high school start times and schedules. She said it is being suggested to try it for a month or so and David said no that would not happen because it is too hard to switch and switch back. Many varying opinions on the idea of the flex time proposal. She suggested that it needs a better definition because there is a growing unease with the idea. What do the kids who don't need extra help do? She is concerned there will be a big backlash. Was also brought up that there is already a lot of "free"



time as it is. The reduction in homework also is not a given. Teachers may use that time to actually add more homework which would negate the idea of stress reduction on the kids.

- A. David said that anytime you change a schedule there is upheaval. Often parents are not even clued into what the schedule actually is. But change is good because this is a chance to engage parents. Lexington high school has a flex time and it is often hard for us to understand because it is so different than what we did. Some parents are up in arms about the loss of academic time. David discussed how it works in Brookline. This a complicated issue.
- B. Information here: <https://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Page/2553>
- C. The messaging around this is critical. There is a question about what you value? Sleep is critical.
- D. It would be good to look at how many "frees" are actually happening in high school.
- E. Would be good some examples for parents to see.
- F. Do we have to have a flex spot every day? Or could it be more infrequent?