

Mamaroneck Council of PTAs Meeting Minutes
October 19, 2015
Hommocks Library Classroom

- I. The meeting was called to order.
- II. The minutes of the meeting on September 18, 2015 was approved.
- III. Board of Education (BOE) Update
 - The Board is considering passing a bond to improve physical education instructional spaces, lockers, and other related areas. It was pointed out that the bond should be called the “Physical Education” bond, and not “Athletic” bond, to avoid misconception that the improvement is luxury and only benefits athletic teams. The Board will further discuss the bond at the upcoming November 3rd meeting. There will be tours of the impacted areas so that community members have an opportunity to see the current state of the spaces.
 - Next BOE meeting on Oct 27 will address topics on student achievement.
 - Discussions are still on-going regarding the “school-based health center” at MAS and whether to retain an consultant to conduct assessments.
 - At the November 17th BOE meeting, topics around summer programs offered by the District will be discussed. After that, there will be a meeting devoted to curriculum issues. Agendas for future meetings are still in making, and will be announced accordingly.
- IV. Old Business
 1. After School Clubs (ASCs)
 - After inquiring with the regional and other PTAs, Pam reported that most other schools do not offer to conduct their own background checks for vendors because of cost.
 - It was also reported that such background checks are not required by the District, just like for other recreational sports teams which also use school facilities. The decision not to offer in-house background check was a State-level decision. The checks should be conducted to comply with the comfort level of building principal and the parents at each school.
 - It was proposed that clubs can place “parent monitors” at the clubs, or build-in the cost into the fees to be charged while making sure they do not become prohibitively expensive.
 - It was agreed that the first option should be to ask the vendors to have it done. Many “commercial” vendors do have them done for their employees, whereas for smaller vendors, that may pose a challenge.
 - It was proposed that Pam will reach out to those involved in ASCs at different schools, so they can share information and come up with a solution.
 2. Regional PTA membership

- It was reported that the Regional PTA (WERP PTA) was made aware of the complaints and issues regarding the new requirement to send individual member's information to be logged into their database. It is still a "work in progress", and they are asking our patience until they sort things out.
- It was suggested that some members may indeed want to receive information from the Regional PTA, so going forward, it was agreed that the best way may be to have an "opt-in/out" option to register the email address.

3. Attendance at Board of Education meetings

- It was suggested that, whenever possible, it was a good idea to attend the BOE meetings. As the future agendas become available, they will be circulated to the members so that they can identify those topics that may be of their interest.

V. SEPTA Report

- It was reported that the speaker for the Building Bridges has been identified. The event will be on March 14th, and the speaker is Dennis Oehler, a Paralympic athlete. Although it is important for the kids to be made aware of "invisible" disabilities, it is easier to find a speaker with physical disability, and given the overall goal of the program, any powerful speaker will be effective.
- He will not be available for the Building Bridges at Murray, which was moved from winter to fall; he will be addressing the entire community at the Spring Building Bridges evening event.
- The reading for 5th grade has been selected: it is a book on the theme of dyslexia called "Fish in a Tree", approved by Annie Ward and elementary school librarians.

VI. Advocacy

- Pam and Kim will be in a meeting with George Latimer, State Senator, and Steven Otis, State Assemblyman. They will report back the outcome of the meeting in our next meeting.

VII. District Communication Update

- The upcoming important communication topic will be the bond vote, should the BOE move ahead with it. There have been communications about the tour of the PE instructional/athletic spaces for the community members to enable them to see it first-hand the critical need to improve the facility.
- In mid-November, the District is planning to recruit community members to form an informal committee to help them with communication and outreach about the bond. It was suggested that "Save the Tiger Teams", a community group that has been successful in raising funds to reinstate athletic teams in the past, may be a good outlet.
- The important point in the communication is that the improvements are not to be considered as luxury, but that they are necessary for safety, health and compliance reasons.

- The question was raised about the timing of wider outreach, and it was suggested that the BOE needs to come to a decision at the Nov 3rd meeting first, and then the communication should be in earnest.
- It was agreed that PT Council will send a reminder about the upcoming tour on Monday, Oct 23, and the subsequent communications will be sent after the Nov 3 BOE meeting.

VIII. Dr Shaps' Update

- He explained that there have been questions about addressing other safety issues before dealing with PE spaces. He described that the Security and Safety Committee has proposed a host of improvements, but the issue of safety is quite complex. For example, even to replace the existing doors to something more secure, there are 108 doors in the MHS building alone. Another suggestion of creating vestibules to create a "buffer zone" is a costly, big undertaking but without any real impact for our schools' safety, which are in a very safe environment.
- On the other hand, the improvements that will be financed by the planned bond have repeatedly been on the list of recommendations from the Building Committee, which reviews the state of the facilities every five years and come up with a list of improvements that need to take place. The proposed improvements pertain to health and safety issues of students within the context of mandated curriculum. The proposed improvements will enhance instruction for 700 students who take PE daily.
- Question was raised on why the HMX pool lockers were part of the plan when they were renovated relatively recently. Dr Shaps responded that the intended work is mainly to fix the problem of ventilation in the locker room.
- The question was raised on how the projects will be financed if the bond fails to pass. Dr Shaps explained that there are three ways to finance capital projects: 1) to create a designated reserve, i.e. "repair fund", that may include A to Z, which then will be appropriated to different projects; 2) one-time transfer from the general reserve to undertake a particular project (e.g. High school turf field), and 3) issuing of a bond, which is the most common way to finance capital projects.
- The proposed bond will be in a range of 11-12 million USD, and given the timing in relations to the existing debt servicing, the future debt-service is expected to actually go down even with the passing of the new bond. At the least, the District wants to show that the borrowing is at level. He also suggested that the construction cost is now beginning to go up, so the more we wait, the more it will be costly.
- The timing is also important because there is a process of approval involving NYSED that may take 10-12 months, and therefore, to have the projects done in the summer of 2017 which is the current plan, the bond will have to pass in Jan 2016.
- A question was raised about the experience in Scarsdale where the bond was recently voted down. He explained that probably the District did not do a good job communicating the issue: perhaps it presented more as luxury with no sense of urgency, and the community felt that there was no limit in District's spending.
- A question was raised about installing AC units in the classrooms. He responded that no school in Westchester County is going to do it, and our District has no plans to do it

either. The cost is prohibitive to be feasible. Having said that, ventilation is an issue and improvements with fans in the building need to be improved. This summer was unusual, but it could happen. In that case, he will sensibly respond by dictating half-day or early dismissal. In terms of the timing of school opening, there is an implication for State funding and the timing is not flexible. Lastly, the District has strict code regarding what can be plugged in and installed in the window.

- The budget process will commence in December, and with the tax cap, we expect another challenging year. We also expect added enrollment.
- He reported that there are 32 teachers currently considered for tenure and he has been busy conducting classroom observations. He is very pleased to see connection to authentic learning in the classrooms.

IX. WEPR PTA

- Pam attended the WEPR PTA meeting. She encouraged that we all take a minute to read what the PTA is doing at the regional and State level because they do a lot of advocacy on a wide range of issues.
- There will be a lunch on Nov 6th hosted by WEPR, and for those who would like to attend, the PT Council can cover the cost.

X. Treasurer's Update

- Miran reported that she received the check from most of the PTAs.
- She reiterated the importance of getting the audits done.
- It was reported that there is currently a reserve two to three times the annual budget, where an accepted practice is to hold about 50% of annual budget in reserve. It is recommended that we find ways to spend down the reserve.
- It was suggested that the funds could be used to pay for a speaker that MHS is inviting. Joan is to share the information with Pam and Kim.

The meeting adjourned at 11:05am.

In Attendance:

PT Council

Pam Buchmueller, President

Kim Tucker, President-Elect

Miran Roberts, Treasurer

Keiko Tannenbaum, Secretary

David Seigerman, Communication

Gail Julie, Legislation

Unit School PTAs

Joan Capaldi, MHS PTA President

Tina Maresca, HMX PTA President
Jackie Emmet, HMX PTA President-Elect
Krista Williams, PTA Central President
Melissa Perez, PTA Central President-Elect
Jackie Shurslep, Chatsworth PTA President-Elect
Pam Brandman, Murray PTA President
Lisa Sommella, MAS PTA President
Sarah Coady, MAS PTA President-Elect
Liz Paras, SEPTA President

District

Melany Gray, Board of Education Liaison
Debbie Manetta, Director of Communications
Dr. Robert Shaps, Superintendent of Schools