

Bowman PTA Board Meeting Minutes

September 12, 2018

Bowman Library

7:00PM Sign-In, Welcome & Introductions

In attendance: Gary Van Deurse, Katie Quick, Courtney Lauriat, Rebecca Fagan Gorospe, Valerie Machinist, Heather Kimura, Amet Zahawe, Alison Stevens, Lauren Avery, Sarah Carter, John Homnick, Xi Sun, Karin Ornstein, Janelle Yildizyon, Heather Ford, Alison Campbell, Cindy Arens, Taleen Gleeson, Anne Norman, Deepa Salman, Jo Sun, Diana Fallon, Sameeksha Meel, Jinsen Zhang, Fatema Sumar, Arthur Campbell

Faculty representatives: Beth Glick, Jenny Corduck, Martha Rogers, Joshua Curhan

- PTA CO-Presidents Gary Van Deurse and Katie Quick welcomed everyone, gave an overview of the evening, and asked people to share questions, ideas and concerns along with their introductions. Most people in attendance were interested in learning more about the PTA and how they can get involved. Faculty representatives Martha Rogers and Joshua Curhan shared that they are interested in continuing to improve how to better liaison between parents and staff.

7:25PM What Are Your Questions?

- **Q:** What is the difference between making a direct donation to the school instead of through the PTA? Is membership the most effective way to support the school and can an employer match the donation?

A: The school is not a 501c3 organization but the PTA is. An employer probably will not match a donation directly to the school but can through the PTA because of its status as a 501c3 organization. Employee match is a great suggestion and we should make it clearer in our membership materials to remind people to see if their employees will match their contribution.

- **Q:** How does the Bowman PTA compare to the PTAs at other Lexington elementary schools? Are they individually driven or all the same?

A: We are in regular communication with the leaders of the PTAs from the other elementary schools, but they are all individually run. The PTA Presidents meet monthly with the Superintendent, members of the School Committee, and PTA leaders from all

the schools in the district. They share ideas and best practices among the schools but each PTA runs on their own and vary from school to school.

- **Q:** Are there opportunities during the fifth-grade year for students from the three elementary schools that will go to Clarke (Bowman, Bridge, and Harrington) to get together prior to starting Middle School? A lot of research suggests the transition to Middle School can be difficult and a suggestion is made that we should think proactively about helping kids build connections among the schools prior to starting Middle School.

A: Other than Moving Up Day when all students from the 5th Grade visit Clarke there are not school-sponsored events to help students make connections across the schools. However, there was agreement that this is a great idea.

- **Q:** How does funding from the district vs. the PTA work? Does the district not fund things (enrichment activities, supplies, etc.) because they know the PTA will fund it and how is this addressed?

A: Principal Corduck responded to this question and shared that she is new to the budget process in Lexington and has an upcoming meeting to talk about the budget for this school year. What she has seen in her tenure as an administrator in other districts is that administrators are traditionally given a baseline budget. There are always trade-offs and not everything fits in the budget. Field trips, extracurricular enrichment activities, grants, supplemental materials, community building, and programming that adds to the curriculum are typically not covered under a regular school budget. All of these expenses are necessary and the school would not be able to have these “extras” without having the work of the PTA behind it. LEF (Lexington Education Foundation) is another organization in town that fundraises to support the schools. PTAs have traditionally advocated for the schools and concerns have been heard. The district used to ask parents to purchase supplies at the beginning of the year, but these supplies are now covered by the district budget.

- **Q:** Is there a Central calendar where all of the events that have been mentioned tonight can be found?

A: The PTA website is full of information, including a calendar of upcoming events and email contacts for organizers on the PTA. The PTA website is: www.bowmanpta.org.

8:00PM Overview of What the PTA Does

Treasurer Overview

- The PTA raises a lot of money but we put it all right back into the school.
- The PTA brings in money through various donations and membership, which has become one of our major ways to raise money. In recent years we have created

different levels of membership and swag which has allowed us to raise a lot more money than previous years.

- The PTA is very careful in budgeting and spending and has checks and balances to make sure all the money goes back into the school.
- Most years the PTA breaks even but we also have a large reserve in the bank. Each year the PTA spends between \$60,000-\$80,000. We put a lot of money into the teachers and the school to make sure we can provide all of these great events.
- We provide stipends to every teacher each year as well as mini-grants for teachers
- We try not to have kids “selling” gift wrap, cookies, etc. Restructuring of membership levels has allowed us to raise most money through membership and a few fundraising events.

Membership Update

- Leveled membership was created a few years ago in order to generate higher revenue through membership so that we could do fewer fundraisers throughout the year. A small amount of the dues goes to the national PTA and the rest goes right into our budget to support Bowman programming. Tiered membership allows people to support the PTA at whatever level they are comfortable with and encourages those who are excited to contribute at higher levels. Swag to go along with membership gives people the opportunity to show Bowman pride.
- Thank you to Principal Corduck for talking up the PTA and encouraging people to join. Membership is slightly ahead of where we were at this point last year. 40% of families have joined so far, but we would like to increase that number. Last year we ended with approximately 70% of families joining.
- All PTA events are open to everyone-you do not need to purchase a membership in order to participate. While we encourage those who can to support the PTA by buying a membership at whatever level you are comfortable, there are lots of ways to get involved in the PTA beyond joining. Volunteering is welcome and necessary for the work that we do.
- If you aren't in a position to purchase a membership but would like one, you can speak confidentially with Principal Corduck to get one.
- Membership dues are for one year and you need to renew your membership each school year.
- Alison Stevens (VP Membership) welcomes creative ideas on how we can reach more people and encourage people to join. Please reach out to her if you have any ideas.

Overview of our PTA

- We are a nonprofit and a member of the National PTA.
- Structure: 2 Co-Presidents, Vice President Positions which each have a responsibility to a variety of programs, and who oversee 1-3 parent coordinators for each event.
- There are many ways to get involved and we are always looking for volunteers as well as suggestions for how can we raise more money, collaborate with local businesses, reach more people, etc.

- In addition to all that we currently do, we are open to what parents would like to see happen. Past parents have brought ideas to the school and implemented them with the support of the PTA. Cindy Arens talked about bringing the Green Team to Bowman and the path the school has taken to implement more sustainable practices within the school. Last year Bowman started composting at PTA events such as Movie Night and this year they are hoping to start composting in the lunchroom.
- The PTA gives funding to teachers, buys playground supplies, and supports a variety of activities and enrichment programs at the school.
- ACT (Arts Created Together) is a PTA-funded program that brings outside educators in the field of arts to do activities/performances at each grade. Some members expressed concern that these events are not well-advertised and parents sometimes do not know they are happening or that we find out long after it has happened through monthly Broadside blurbs. While the pattern has typically been to discuss the event after it has happened it was suggested that we better inform families prior to or immediately after the events occur at school so families can talk about them at home.
- Principal Corduck feels very strongly about communication between the school and families and is hoping to re-vamp the current communications so there is a rich dialogue where families are better informed about what is happening in the school. She is committed to figuring out how to bridge the gap and do a better job with communication between school and home.
- The PTA has a Facebook page and a Twitter page in addition to a weekly email, monthly newsletter, and sign at the front entrance. We are moving away from paper flyers but will still send them out occasionally. The PTA website is full of information and can be found at: www.bowmanpta.org.

7:40 PM How You Can Get Involved

There are many ways to get involved in the PTA. Below are some highlights of activities that we typically organize each school year.

- **Bowman Auction**-This parent-only event runs every other year and is the largest fundraiser for the PTA. Two years ago the auction was combined with the school's 50th anniversary and the event was a lot of fun. There was a cash bar, silent and live auction, and a DJ. We don't currently have any parents signed up to make the auction happen this year-please let us know if you are interested in helping!
- **Staff Appreciation**-typically organizes a back-to-school breakfast for teachers as well as an end-of year pot-luck style lunch as well as some treats during Teacher Appreciation Week in the spring. We are still looking for volunteers to organize for this school year.
- **Big Backyard and Library volunteers**-these are both opportunities to interact with students. A few classes still need volunteers for library duty.
- **Science Fair**-PTA puts on every year and this year we are trying to expand it so that it doesn't have such a limited capacity. Parent volunteers act as visiting scientists and engage with students around their projects

- **Family Math Night**-students and parents participate in math activities together
- **Book Swap**-evening event in the spring. Opportunity to bring in books you're done with and leave with books "new to you". Usually paired with a social activity such as an ice cream social.
- **BOKS**-a before-school physical activity run by parent volunteers. This is an example of why we need volunteers to make our events happen. BOKS did not run last year because we didn't have parents to staff it. This year we do and we anticipate it will run on Mon and Thursday mornings this year. Information will be forthcoming.
- **Welcome Back Picnic**-This year's event was on Friday, September 14 and was potluck style. The Green team was there to help with composting, as well as special guests musician Beth Glick and the Bowman Bear.
- **Fifth Grade Activities**-The PTA supports a variety of activities for the fifth-grade class including a yearbook, slideshow, luau, spaghetti dinner, t-shirt and moving-on ceremony. Most fundraising for fifth-grade activities is through the fifth-grade families as well as from the spaghetti dinner.
- **Passport to the World**- This made a return last year after several years' hiatus. It was expanded this past year with new elements such as a video narrative with students talking about their culture/identity. This interfaced well with the dismantling racism curriculum, and also included a map with languages, performances, booths, potluck of cultural foods, etc. Beth Glick is chairing the committee but is looking for more parent volunteers to help. Last year it was mostly run by staff and they would love more parent volunteers this year. Please reach out to Beth if interested.
- **Book Fair**-runs for about two weeks over the teacher conference weeks in the fall. We will need volunteers so be on the lookout to sign up. You can also help by purchasing books for classrooms from teacher/specialist wish-lists.
- **Bowman Adventure Run**-October 21. The timed run is a 5K that goes through the neighborhood and conservation land. There is also a kids' fun run.
- **Disco Bingo and Class Basket Raffle**-each class puts together a basket and students buy tickets. Baskets are raffled off during Disco Bingo in the spring.
- **Spirit Wear**-will be coming out soon
- **Spaghetti Dinner**-typically in late winter/early spring. This event always sells out, so sign up quickly when ticket purchases are announced.

8:25 PM Adjourn

All email addresses are on the PTA website-we are available to answer any questions you have.

Next PTA meetings:

October 24, 7:00pm

October 25, 8:45am

Tonight's meeting was not a typical meeting as they are usually more of a working meeting. Anyone is welcome at future meetings and we encourage people to attend.

