

Central PTO Meeting Minutes

March 4, 2016

In attendance: Heather Smith (President), Lynn Wellehan (VP Communications), Amy Polachek (Treasurer), Sara Ridder (Secretary), Trisha Kocanda (Superintendent), Beth Kauffmann (President, Crow Island PTO), Kim Ronan (President, Greeley PTO), Jen Hayes (President, Hubbard Woods PTO), Karin Palasz (Co-chair Skokie-Washburne PTO), Heather Pigott (Co-chair Skokie-Washburne PTO), Jennifer Pehlke (School Board), Cynthia Cata (Nominating)

The meeting was called to order at 9:16.

Heather welcomed the group.

Secretary's Report – Sara Ridder

The minutes were approved.

Nominating Report – Cynthia Cata

The proposed slate was distributed, as follows:

President: Jenny Keller (HW/SW)

VP Communications: Brie Root (HW/SW)

Treasurer: Julie Eldring (G/SW)

Secretary: Shannon Preda (CI/SW)

Cynthia asked that PTO presidents post this on their website at least 5 days prior to our Annual meeting in April. In addition to the slate, they should include the written notice of the meeting date, time and place. Staff should also be notified of this. The vote will take place at the beginning of the Central PTO April meeting. Thank you to everyone who was part of the nominating committee.

Superintendent's Report – Trisha Kocanda

Barry Rogers has been named as the District's Director of Innovation, Teaching and Learning. The job will be very similar to what Alison Hawley was doing; the new title is in line with the District's vision. We are very excited to have Barry join us. He's a very inspiring person. His past experience includes helping to found Northside College Prep in the city, where he brought innovative programming to the school and managed performance. Most recently, he has been serving as Principal of Lake Forest High School.

The Hubbard Woods Principal position is still open. The District has been through the first round of applicants and is now engaging a search firm to help.

There are Parent Education Workshops coming up including a session on Gender on March 22nd with Jennifer Leinenger. There will be also a program on matching "just right" books on March 16th with Emily Smith.

Recently, Linda Yonke conducted an information session on how Winnetka Public Schools stack up against the other New Trier feeder schools. There was a lot of good data that was shared. For example, we represent about 19% of the leadership roles at New Trier, and 28% of our students hold leadership positions. There was feedback about how helpful it is to have this presentation available online.

There was discussion about the need to build bridges across the generations of parents to help put the parents of younger children at ease. The District is proactively reaching out to the preschools to help with this.

Significant decisions will be made at the March School Board meeting. Votes include the financial support of STEAM as well as the tax abatement issue.

The other significant vote is for Phase 1 of Crow Island's space relief plan. This includes bringing in two classroom units to be used for specials, Music and Spanish. They are working with neighbors on landscaping plans. Currently, this Phase 1 plan is for three years. Phase 2 will depend upon the District's decision on all-day kindergarten, among other factors.

PARCC is coming up. The State sent an inquiry to those Districts with less than 95% participation last year. We were very diligent about keeping our records and communicating with the state so we don't anticipate any issues. Changes have been made to make the process smoother this year. The PARCC testing will all be held in April and there will be some sessions beforehand to familiarize students with the technology that is being used.

It was discovered that we have over 140 pieces of furniture across our schools that are regarded as unsafe because they are of flammable material, and will have to be removed. The school PTOs may want to work with the schools to help replace these items.

Adventures in Learning registration was much smoother this year. Residents appreciated the opportunity to register one week earlier. We did not have time to explore the idea of holding two separate sessions but will look at this in the future. A survey will be sent out at the end of the session as well.

The school calendar has been approved for next year. The District is trying to reduce the number of broken instruction weeks. There will be school on Martin Luther King Day, but it will be a service-oriented day. The first day of school is August 29th.

Tricia reported that she would be attending the education conference at South by Southwest in Austin. She is looking forward to bringing back new learnings and ideas.

School Board Report - Jennifer Pehlke

Jennifer reiterated that the Board's March agenda is very full.

She shared results from the Caucus survey that found out residents are, overall, very happy with the schools and the teachers. The survey also revealed that residents believe this is more important than test scores.

Jennifer reminded the committee that next year we will be electing a couple of new school board members and asked the committee to think about individuals who would be good candidates.

President's Report – Heather Smith

Heather thanked the Nominating Committee for their important work. We will be voting on the slate at our April meeting, which is a very important one.

Next month we will be working on the checks for the organizations that we support. While the Winnetka Schools Foundation is not on this list at present, we will contribute to them if there is extra money.

Treasurer Report – Amy Polachek

Amy distributed the proposed 2016-2017 Central PTO Budget for review, which is similar to last year's budget. We will also be voting on this at our April meeting.

There was a change to the by-laws proposed by Julia Werner, Hubbard Woods PTO Treasurer. In Article VI Section 4 it specifies that: "All checks for \$500 or less shall be signed by the Treasurer. Checks for more than \$500 shall also be signed by one another authorized Officer." She is asking for the \$500 amounts to be raised to \$1,000. This will alleviate significant logistical issues with double signatures required for a large number of purchases. All of the other schools support this change as well.

VP Communications Report – Lynn Wellehan

We need to prepare for InfoSnap. InfoSnap is in the process of making changes and will invite us back to see the beta version. Someone from each school should attend to give input. It was suggested that a communications calendar be put together with information on who will need the list, when they will need it, and the type of information they will require.

Skokie/Washburne – Heather Pigott and Karin Palasz

The Skokie/Washburne PTO is beginning to plan for next year by transitioning with the new chairs. The volunteer form for next year will be sent out soon.

The PTO is determining how to best support the STEAM initiative at both schools.

The plan for the cafeteria renovation is moving along.

The new water bottle filling stations will be installed over spring break. Other asked about the logistics and cost of this, which is \$2,500. A water bottle sale is being planned for Earth Week.

Crow Island – Beth Kauffmann

The nominating process for next year is underway. They have also been meeting with committee chairs to try to plan for next year. The volunteer form will go out soon.

The school has had several special guests come to speak about the new classrooms. They have been out in front of the issue and it seems to be going smoothly.

Recently, PTO meetings have been structured a bit differently, with the first 15 minutes spent on a "deep dive" into an issue on people's minds. This has been productive.

Greeley – Kim Ronan

STEAM night is coming up. A team that includes parents, and math and science facilitators organizes the event. There are different stations – like circuits, Legos, and marshmallow catapult. This year it has been expanded to 1 ½ hours and will also take place in the gym as well as the multipurpose room.

Kim reported that the Parent Party went well.

Hubbard Woods – Jen Hayes

Hubbard Woods recently held their Math Night. It was successful and will be expanded to include other aspects of STEAM in the future.

Jen also mentioned the Cardboard Challenge that Hubbard Woods had done earlier in the year and asked if other schools might be interested in coordinating a similar event across the District.

In preparation for the upcoming 100 Anniversary Celebration in May, they are working on a video featuring alumni.

Committee Business

The Committee had a discussion about Math. There was consensus that the Math Talks are valuable and help parents understand the approach. It was suggested that it might be beneficial to have this type of presentation included in the Go to School Night program as it is an event with high attendance.

The point was also raised that parents do not always find it helpful to have children attend the teacher conferences at Skokie. It makes it difficult to talk about issues or ask questions they may have.

Directories – Each PTO president had asked their board about transitioning from paper to electronic directories. Of the five schools, Greeley was the only one that had significant pushback. The other schools are in agreement with this change as long as it is possible for individuals to print the information and information is shared about how to do this. It was determined that since Greeley could print out the directory from the electronic format, this approach should be workable across the District. Directory Spot will continue to serve as the central base of information and schools can customize it from there. Each school will still need an individual to handle the directory and get the information into InfoSnap. The District will compile information for the district-wide handbook, which will be handled by Linda. Specific school information and additional resources can be included on the school website.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:09.