

BIRCH LANE PTA

Executive/ General Board Meeting Minutes

Date: Friday, March 12, 2021

Time: 9:45 am

Place: Held Virtually via Google Meet

Heather Callahan, Presiding President

- Meeting called to order: at 9:45am
- Held Virtually via Google Meet

A quorum was present: 22 members

Vote and Approve Prior Meeting Minutes from previous meeting from November: Correction to the "October" expenses and income (as opposed to September typo) in the Treasurer's Report. Motion made to approve the amended minutes.

Mrs. Iconis: Mr. Adcock and I are here this morning to present the upcoming Budget. We're proud of this budget, it is fiscally responsible, I believe it's reasonable, and most importantly it preserves all of our programs. That was not easy to do given the climate that we're operating under. There are some enhancements to our Special Education program and we can be secure in knowing that the district is moving forward in a very positive way. You may have heard that we are planning on running our summer programs this year but we're still waiting on guidelines from the State Education Department. From Summer Recreation to Summer Fine Arts, Camp Invention to the high school summer school program, we are planning on business as usual.

Mr. Adcock: We started the budget development somewhere in the October/November time frame, but at that time, we didn't know what the tax cap would bring. The tax cap is important because the state sets a number with the highest number being 2%. Depending on where the tax cap is, it can either go to the full 2% level or it can limit the amount of additional money that the district can spend in the subsequent year to cover its fixed costs. We found out in January that the tax cap came in at 1.23%, about ¾ of a percent less than what the 2% tax cap would typically be, limiting us by \$1.2 million. We had to figure out under the cap how we'd spend \$1.2 million less because of the cap that was set by NYS. A lot has to do with staffing. We got about 15 teacher and administration retirements so we've built those replacement salaries into the budget. After going through that exercise and using a little bit more of our reserve accounts to help fund our programs next year that all of our programs remain intact. Mrs. Iconis indicated that there's some enhancements to our special education program. We've also been able to build into the budget in the event that we needed some additional money (\$100k for COVID supplies). Yesterday the Governor indicated that there are no quarantine restrictions for domestic travel when you come back to New York State. Last year, before the pandemic, we had planned not to run the summer programs because of the construction that was going on. That construction has continued to go on, and I'm happy to report that we're ready to run a full complement of summer programs. The Budget vote last year was a mail in, but this year we believe it will be a traditional budget vote with in-person voting on May 18th, 2021, the third Tuesday in May. We will have all of the appropriate COVID protocol at all of our locations.

Q: Does the budget allow for students returning from remote learning and will student class size be changed as a result?

A: Yes, the budget does allow for all of those students returning from remote learning and the board is committed to keeping those class sizes within class size guidelines with priority given to early primary (K-2).

Q: Does the budget assume that the EDLC will continue next year?

A: No, it does not, we are not planning on the full remote elementary school to continue next year. Things seem to be heading in the right direction and we are hopeful that everyone will be able to return.

Q: If the budget is not approved, can the fund balance allow for most or all of those initiatives to go forward without depleting too much?

A: The Board would have to make some type of decision as to whether it wanted to use fund balance and reserve accounts to keep the programs or not. Moving from one year to the next, what happens is that you need to be prepared every single year to use that amount to continue to run the programs that you have. Within a very short period of time you run out of fund balance.

Q: How much if any from the federal stimulus package goes to the local schools?

A: We learned this year that the State Education was taking away \$174,000 in state aid but at the very same time they were indicating that they were going to be covering it with COVID money that the state is getting. Next year, NYS is cutting Massapequa state aid by 6.5 million but they indicated that federal government COVID stimulus funds were coming in the exact amount to cover the state's short fall.

Q: You mention \$100,000 in COVID supplies, so can we assume the mask requirement will be in place next year?

A: The \$100,000 is primarily for supplies for disinfecting the classrooms. As far as the masks go, I don't know if there will be a mask mandate. Will there continue to be a shield mandate? We're waiting on guidance from the State Education Department and that hasn't been issued yet.

Q: Are they required to use those federal monies to cover the state aid gap or can they decide to use for other purposes?

A: I don't specifically know the answer to that question

Thank you to Mrs. Iconis and Mr. Adcock.

Thank you: Bulletin Board Committee (Stacey Sandurs, Kristen Larmann), Blood Drive Committee (Gayle Famiglietti), Holiday Fair Committee (Sue McEvoy, Tara Hochberg, Kira Mallia), Birch Twig (Jen Saporita, Andrea Ash), Book Fair (Tracy Lowrey, Ellen Williamson), PARP (Gracemarie Rozea, Jacklyn Graham, Beth Fallacaro, Kristen Cadmus), Reflections (Jen Curran, Linda Venuto), Supply Kits (Sue O'Brien, Kristen Wright), Spirit Wear (Marianna Somers, Stephanie Iannuzzi), Hospitality Committee (Jodi Ricardo, Katie McAuley and Amy MacLeod)

Correspondence - Kiri Spillane

From Ms. Merz: "Thank you so much for your thoughtful gift, everything you do is very much appreciated."

Treasurer Report - Marianna Somers

Checking Account:

At our last meeting on November 17, 2020, we had a balance of \$27,697.66. As of today, March 12, 2021, our balance is \$28,067.78.

Expenses:

Beautification of Blacktop at school: \$187.00
Holiday Staff Gifts in lieu of luncheon: \$947.00

Membership Dues & Fees: \$190.00

PARP Prizes: \$208.00

Income:

Fall Spirit Wear: \$1715.00
Supply Kit Rebate (Growth Program): \$311.00

Kid Stuff Coupon Books: \$360.00

Membership: \$92

Membership Update: We're currently at 363 Members; we're a little down in membership this year, last year we had close to 500 members

The statements for November through February were reconciled by Stephanie Iannuzzi

Heather Callahan: The Nassau Region has asked all the units to formulate a Diversity, Inclusion and Equity Committee. The info for that is in the meeting folder. We need a motion to take a vote. Right now it seems to be the scope would be to make sure that everyone has equal access to the internet, especially during Covid. The email says all PTA units should have a Diversity, Inclusion and Equity committee. Attached you will find information and PTA position papers on the subject.

If anyone is opposed to voting indicate in the chat; If anyone is opposed to a committee vote put it in the chat; Is anyone for a vote right now; Everyone for a diversity committee please indicate in the chat

We'll proceed with the vote and at the next meeting we'll present a full plan for everyone to review so we could update the procedures; motion made for the vote. Everyone for the diversity committee please indicate in the chat. If there's anyone opposed to it, please indicate. At the next meeting we'll have a write up so we can amend our procedures.

Legislation Report - Marianna Somers

Legislative Summit and Lobby Day was held virtually on February 27, 2021. Issues discussed included

Digital and Technology Equity and Access, State Budget and School Aid, Mental Health Support for Students, and Opposition to the Legalization of Recreational Marijuana. For more information, visit nyspta.org and search for the Legislative Summit and Lobby Day.

The Nominating Committee met on February 17, 2021 with the following members present: Marianna Somers, Linda Venuto, Elizabeth Edelbach, Stephanie Iannuzzi and Jodi Ricardo. The following names are placed in nomination to serve as officers of Birch Lane PTA for the 2021-2022 School Year:

President: Heather Callahan

1st Vice President: Amy MacLeod

Vice President Ways and Means: Stephanie Iannuzzi

Treasurer: Marianna Freda-Somers

Recording Secretary: Tara Fay

Corresponding Secretary: Kiri Spillane

PARP - Gracemarie Rozea

PARP concluded on February 12. Despite the challenges that were presented this year, the committee was able to develop a full program for the children. A PARP email account and a Birch Lane PARP YouTube channel were created and will be used in the future. In keeping with the theme "Reading Gives You Super Powers", 26 community heroes were included with videos of them reading stories to the students shown online. 360 students presented participation forms and students and partners read for over 96,020 minutes. Gift bags were distributed at the end of the program to all students. At the request of Massapequa Council's PARP chair, the Birch Lane PTA program has been shared with other units in Massapequa School District. The committee is in the process of completing the PARP award application to be submitted to Nassau Region PTA for consideration.

SEPTA Report - Anthony Prizzi *(presented by Heather Callahan)*

The next SEPTA meeting will be Wednesday April 14th– the school budget will be presented and the election of the Massapequa SEPTA Executive Board will take place. Guest speaker will be Eileen Taylor, from Long Island Regional Supervisor from Special Education Quality Assurance. The topic is general information about IEPs and special education services. In honor of National Siblings Day, the Sibling Support Project is hosting the world's biggest Sibshop on April 8th at 7pm. Siblings of children with special developmental, health and mental health concerns are invited to attend this free event. SEPTA hosted a virtual Resource Fair all February long, which included 20 days of information, videos and meets. SEPTA will be celebrating World Down Syndrome Day on 3/21/21 with Rock Your Socks. Specially designed Massapequa SEPTA socks will be available for fundraising. If you are interested in finding out more details and information about any of the items listed above, please visit our website or Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/MassapequaSEPTA>. SEPTA fundraising items are available on membership

hub. Anyone that is interested in becoming a SEPTA member please visit <https://massapequasetpa.wordpress.com>. Please like us on Facebook @Massapequa SEPTA. If you are interested in volunteering with Massapequa SEPTA please contact us at msdsepta@gmail.com.

BOE Report - Stephanie Iannuzzi

Recaps of all the meetings since our last PTA meeting are in the PTA folder

At the BOE Mrs. Iconis updated on the summer activities. They're hoping to run a full complement of programs and if there are still restrictions in place they're planning on modified programs. Registration will probably be held in May and they're looking for student leader applications in late April. There are also numerous activities and events that will be returning to in-person sessions and more details will be coming soon. Massapequa seniors received an email with upcoming events and celebrations. The sports season kicked off in January. Middle school sports will begin soon and the spring season begins April 20th. Elementary district learning center had 164 students; Berner Middle School had 162 students, Ames had 72 students and MHS had 440 students at the time of the BOE meeting. State assessments were discussed: the federal government released a memo stating that they would not grant a blanket waiver to exempt the exams from happening this year but they did invite the states to plead their case. New York has submitted a waiver request and they're waiting to hear back. At this time it is their understanding that the 3-8 assessments in ELA and Math will be given and the NYS Regents will be given in June unless New York is given the waiver. There is also a Pandemic Response Plan that is being submitted for review. Mr. Adcock also did the Budget presentation.

Junior Senior Meeting: Presented by Amy MacLeod

The guest was Kathy Samuels the Program Director for Massapequa Takes Action Coalition. Their mission is to prevent substance abuse but a lot of their work centers around healthy families. She discussed hot spots where youth gather and use substances and found a hotspot in the Massapequa Preserve. The next guest was Social Worker Larissa Sing who talked about stress during COVID-19 and how we encourage children to cope. Some strategies are to take care of your body, read, listen to music, dance, make art, facetime friends, reach out to supports, and seek help. The YES Community Counseling Center and Long Island Crisis Hotline are available for help. How parents model coping with stress teaches children.

Council Report - Amy MacLeod *From the Council Meeting on 3/1/21*

Comments from the guest, Dr. McCaw:

- MHS is transforming a classroom into an apartment for their Life Skills class. They will have a washer/dryer, dishwasher, and other kitchen appliances
- Students 18 and above can get paid for on-site job work
- There is a psychiatrist available one day a week in the district as a resource for any student. They can do evaluations
- There will be a climate survey for everyone in the district in October to gauge mental health, belonging, and diversity
- They are creating an Inclusion Committee to focus on including Special Education students better

Comments from Mr. Esposito:

- The Berner building is beginning to resemble normal. They have the most students in the building they have had all year
- There is a feeling that things are getting better
- The staff is looking to bring somethings back after spring break. They will follow all guidelines but looking to bring some clubs back responsibly.
- Not sure what is happening with state assessments yet
- 140 students are distance learning
- 1300 plus students in school every day
- If it isn't possible to bring incoming 6th graders to see the school in the spring, they will certainly have an opportunity to tour the school over the summer

Dr. Fasano:

Waiting for guidance on Regents and state assessments

Mrs. Haanradts

- Small group instruction is still happening on the elementary level
- Health and safety are always the number one priority
- It is critical to keep small group instruction components; this is where we see growth and change

Reflections – Linda Venuto

We had slightly under 30 students participate and the winners were announced in the March Twig and we had a couple of students move on from Nassau County to NYS

Supply Kits - Sue O'Brien (*presented by Heather Callahan*)

School supply kits are on sale from 3/1 to 3/29 . A portion of the sales go to the school. If you have any questions please email Susan.obrien@yahoo.com

Spirit Wear - Stephanie Iannuzzi or Marianna Somers

We kicked off the sale this past Monday and we're off to a great start! We wanted to thank everyone who has shopped so far and also New Wave sports. There's still time to order until 3/21!

Spring Fundraiser – Lisa Sessa (*presented by Amy MacLeod*)

We've had a few meetings to discuss the event. Committee members have had a few ideas on how to move forward with this event. The event will be completely virtual and we are trying to finalize a website for the auction. The prizes will consist of class baskets. We've opted not to solicit donations from our local stores as everyone has been affected by the pandemic. We've asked class parents to submit their baskets by 3/14. Final dates have been discussed but not finalized yet. We are thinking it will be at the end of

April/beginning of May.

Little Ladies Dance & Boys Bash - Kathleen Mecabe and Robyn Castle

Little Ladies Dance is planning a virtual dance in lieu of the in-person dance. We are currently in the planning stages and will send out the info very soon.

The Boys Bash committee is also working hard to plan an event for the boys of Birch Lane; however we would like everyone to know that this virtual event is open to every student. Keep your eyes and ears open for the upcoming Birch Lane Dance as it will be for everyone, both boys and girls!

Reports from teachers - Mrs. Germaine and Miss Downey

Mrs. Germaine (Kindergarten through Third Grade)

Kindergarten:

Kindergarten is busy getting ready for spring!

Science: Finishing up unit on weather and starting natural resources

Reading: Nonfiction unit

The children will be spending time outside reading and listening stories

Writers workshop: How to unit, the students have selected their topics and are working on drafting, editing and revising their stories

Math: Learning different strategies in addition and subtraction

First Grade:

First Grade celebrated Dr. Seuss' birthday

Reading and Writing: Nonfiction unit

Math: Beginning to explore place value and can skip count by 10s

Science: Learning about living things and their young and adult plants and animals

All about books: Animal topics

The students are excited to do enrichment with Miss Downey!

Second Grade:

We celebrated the Chinese new year virtually

Published our non-fiction books by looking at children's author Gayle Gibbons

Science: Began our unit on the earth's surface and how we can map land and water

We're excited to begin enrichment on changes to the earth's surface

We wish everyone a happy spring!

Miss Downey

Third Grade:

Students just finished writing their non-fiction books

Math: Started unit in fractions and learning about parts of a whole

Social Studies: Concluded their study of Japan and will soon be traveling to Mexico

Science: Learning about force and motion

The students continue to enjoy their weekly Spanish classes

Fourth Grade:

Actively participating in fun activities that help to better understand animal's unique adaptations to help them survive

Math: Unit on fractions

Writers workshop: Studied mentor texts and learned the elements of nonfiction writing

Students are looking forward to spring!

Fifth Grade:

Fifth grade has had a great second marking period with lots of exciting projects across all subjects

ELA: Nonfiction unit and learned about non-fiction text features

Also completed biographies which will be displayed and shared soon

Math: Multiplying and dividing fractions

Social studies: Learned all about the explorers and the events of the Spanish and French exploration in the Western Hemisphere

Science: Learned about how organisms changed in their eco systems

Currently working hard to create Google Slides on a biome they created in Enrichment

Reports from Administration - Mr. Aspetti and Mrs. Larkin

Thank you again for having us this morning!

We echo your Thank Yous to all of our committee members! Every person has done a wonderful job adapting to our current environment to keep these committees continuing this year. We love the idea of a virtual Little Ladies dance and working with a dance school to create that event.

We want to thank the PTA for the PARP gifts, the kids were so excited to get them and the teachers really appreciated them.

I would like to publicly thank our class parents from the class holiday parties

Building update:

We are opening up our playground this coming Monday. We will be opening up the big toy area but will remain cohorted as we've done all year. There is a new product that we're going to be using on that equipment called Bio Shield which breaks up a virus and is good for a 90-day period. One class per grade level per day will be rotating every single week.

The last time we met there was a question that came out in regards to the air conditioners. We have an update: All rooms have been installed and they will be testing that during the break. We have our spring parties and spring recess. There is no change to our protocol for the spring parties. Please arrange with the classroom teacher to make sure the snacks are safe for all children in the class. Spring recess is scheduled for 3/26-4/6. I know Mrs. Iconis and Mr. Adcock mentioned about travel guidelines. The district has followed the guidelines for NYS. As of now, the guidelines are on the NYS website.

Nice weather is on its way! We are opening up our outdoor spaces for reading and outdoor activities. Please start sending in towels and yoga mats for your children.

When we return from break there was some mention of things opening back up. Specials push in to the classrooms. Our fifth graders will be returning to the art room, music room and library the Wednesday we get back from break.

NYS testing: ELA scheduled for Tuesday and Wednesday 4/20 and 4/21

Math Grades 3-5 May 4th and 5th

Grade 4 only will have the science test June 7th and performance dates scheduled TBD
I've already started receiving some email letters. If state testing does take place, we're starting to look at what protocol will look like, more to come on that.

We have a couple of hero squad dates remaining. Today is super hero day. We're collecting the \$1 donations. Next Friday is time warp Friday which is dressing from a different decade. The next Friday is Birch Lane spirit day and will be the last day of our hero squad days.

Supply Kits: what we put on those lists are the common supplies for each grade level. If the teacher asks for a specific supply, that is not on that list. You will not be able to complete your supplies until placement letters go out at the end of August.

We will be celebrating Autism Awareness in April. We're working with Dr. Bertrand on how we will be participating. We'll be lighting it up Blue on a chosen day and we'll celebrate differences in the classroom.

Questions from the chat:

Q: Do you have specs for the spray?

A: I do not, but you can reach out to Mr. O'Donnell in buildings and grounds but I can look into that as well.

Q: Is that sanitization expected to continue next year as well?

A: If it needs to continue it absolutely will. We'll look at that over the summer. There is no expectation to change our protocols currently.

Q: Is the playground only the big playground or is it inclusive of the kindergarten play ground?

A: It will be included in the rotation

Q: Will virtual students be able to take the assessments?

A: I don't know that yet. The question becomes how to ensure the validity of the assessment if taken outside of the testing environment. More to come on that.

Q: Did you say the district sent a waiver request to the State?

A: No, the state sends a waiver request to the federal government. It's up to the federal government to decide if they want to provide the waiver or not. We're still in the process and don't have an answer just yet. It's a lot of work in a typical year and adding these health and safety protocols this year makes it more challenging. We're working on schedules in anticipation that it's going to happen. State tests are untimed at this point. In regards to what we'll do with our refusals and how we're under very strict protocols, in the past we've taken our refusal students and have put them in a very large space. It's very important for parents to go onto parent portal and fill out those forms as the more information we'll have the better it will be. The state is asking for the amount of info we've gathered through our local assessments to be sufficient for this year.

I apologize for the length of this meeting, it's always tricky when the budget gets proposed.

Keep scanning the box tops and scanning them on the app

Book Fair: Tracey Lowery

The book fair is still happening through Sunday and we do get a profit. We're doing great so far despite it's being virtual. I also wanted to thank Mr. Aspetti and Mrs. Larkin for their help and support. Mrs. Lee has also been reading about it during her classes.

Meeting adjourned at 11:12am.

Virtually via Google Meet

Upcoming Events

MARCH

March 1-14 Book Fair (virtual)

March 1-14 Book Fair (virtual)

March 1-29 Supply Kit Sale

March 8-21 Spirit Wear Sale

March 18 BOE Meeting

March 29-April 6 Spring Recess

APRIL

April 8 BOE meeting

April 16 PTA meeting 9:45 am

April 28 Meet the Candidates Night

SPRING (dates to be determined)

Little Ladies Dance/Boys Bash

Spring Fundraiser

Plant Sale