

Minutes of the
Roosevelt School PTO Meeting
October 15, 2008

Co-President, Susanna Zysk, brought the October meeting of the Roosevelt School to order at 7:10 p.m. Board members present were Co-Presidents, Giovanna Spinale and Susanna Zysk, Vice President Betsey Benagh and Secretary, Rosemary Rossi. Treasurer Kathy Nottingham had to excuse herself due to illness.

Principal's Report: Principal Kerry Clery spoke about the school's website and the fact that the district would like all school websites to be the same. She indicated that Betsey Benagh has stepped up and is our Webmaster for now. If anyone has any suggestions for what should be on the website, please contact Mrs. Clery. Betsey will be working with our new Webmaster for a smooth transition. The newsletters will be posted on the website and hopefully in the future in an effort to conserve paper will be on the website only. The monthly calendar will be on the website and will not be sent home in backpacks. The website will contain a staff list and contact information, lunch menu, PTO information and events. Principal Clery informed the group that Superintendent Casey has purchased a Smart board for each elementary school. It is an interactive white board, which is portable. The middle school got one in each classroom. All classrooms at the high school have one now. They have been ordered and will be coming to the schools.

Junior Achievement: Kristin Blum spoke about Junior Achievement. Junior Achievement is a good way to talk to kids about economics. Junior Achievement runs Kindergarten to grade 12. Programs are all about 30 to 45 minutes to teach for 5 weeks. The volunteer works out a schedule with the teacher. Junior Achievement gets kids to work together. There is about 5 minutes of explaining, 15 minutes of hands on activity and then another 5 minutes or so to clean up. Each grade level has its own topic ranging from ourselves, our family, elections, our city, our region and resources and our nation. There are two books, one for the teacher and one for the volunteer. Everything is in the kit. It is all age appropriate. Ms. Blum advised that one of the goals of Junior Achievement is that they are trying to educate kids to stave off economic issues like we are having now. Question: How do you implement into the classroom. Answer: you work it out with the teacher as to the day and time. The teacher is always there. They do not leave. Question: are you usually assigned to your child's classroom? Answer: It's up to you. There is a question on the sign up sheet asking if you would also agree to teach another classroom other than your child's. Question: Is it open to all classrooms? Answer: It is open to all grades but we've had some trouble getting volunteers and that's why we asked for an open meeting to introduce the program again.

Principal Clery had an addendum: She indicated that the last time the PTO met we were talking about the Library Media Specialist and we did not have one but we have one now. She introduced Rachel Ennis. Rachel spoke - she is working with the 1st and 3rd grades this year. We work on literacy skills and tie in math skills, etc. We are getting students interested in learning library skills.

Giovanna Spinale spoke: For new parents and those who do not know some of the teachers in the school she introduced Linda Fargo, Susan Jones and Rosemary Rossi, all present at the meeting.

5th Grade Recognition Update: Doreen Cincotta spoke about the event. She explained that it is a party in June for 5th grade students and 2 adults to come and celebrate. They have a slide show, they get a yearbook and there is a meal. The event is organized and run by 5th grade parents. The PTO processes the checks but parents raise all funds. 5th grade parents met for the first time to plan the fundraising. Doreen explained that they went over the PTO bylaws. They reviewed what they can and cannot do. They discussed fundraising projects. They decided to have a cookie dough sale and the wreaths, etc. sale. They circulated sign up sheet for committees. They discussed the scale of the event and expectations of parents. She indicated that most of that was tabled until they know how much money they raise. The scale of the event will be restricted by the budget.

Citywide: The Alliance Against Violence representative came to the meeting to talk about the annual candlelight vigil. Question: What is citywide? Answer: It is a meeting with all PTOs across the city to discuss issues that are going on across the city. We meet to schedule things around each other. Mr. Casey came to the meeting and told us about the state grant that the city received last year. It is a one-time thing. It consists of \$10,000 for the High School library,

\$40,000 for band, \$40,000 for Pre-K literacy, and some funds for the High School renovation. The Verizon kiosk takes old cell phones for the Alliance Against Violence. The Lincoln School is asking for anti-violence program funding. It was also indicated that the Trivia Bee is going to be held on March 28.

Ellen O'Neill spoke about the Tipline. It is a confidential phone number to report crimes. There is no caller ID. You call 781 665 TIPS to report any crime. There was a major discussion about the economy and how people are freaking out. PTO must define school priorities and examine school traditions and figure out what is necessary rather than what is wanted. It was suggested that there be a Public School endowment - Melrose High Alumni Association to solicit donations. They asked Mr. Casey about the gifted and talented program. He said that a lot of students came in over the summer and additional students had to be tested and one person was going over the tests. They need to re-evaluate those tests. The tests were over-analyzed. He does not now have a date. He will send out another connect-ed when he has any further information.

Genevieve's Update: Ellen O'Neill passed out a report about the fundraiser. Total profit was \$6,252.05 to date. It takes 3 weeks for the product to come in after the order is received. We have a bicycle in the school for a student who participated. Everyone who participated had a name put in the hat. Mrs. Clery picked Courtney Cunningham's name from the hat. Question: what was profit last year? Answer: \$7,700.

Rollerworld Update: Giovanna Spinale spoke for Carla McAree who could not attend the meeting. Giovanna explained what Rollerworld night is. Proceeds from the night go to the school. There are 2 rinks a large and a small rink. It is a lot of fun and you can buy food there if you need to have dinner. It runs from 6 to 8. The date is November 19. It is a Wednesday night. Carla said she needs another 1 or 2 volunteers. Contact Betsey Benagh and she will add your name to her list of volunteers. Principal Clery asked what volunteers do. Giovanna explained that they direct people where to get skates and they are there to collect money. They help out students.

Halloween Party Update: The Halloween party is Saturday, October 25, from 6 to 8 p.m. It is \$5 per child and no charge for adults. There are games, there is a DJ, and everyone wears costumes. There are crafts, water, desserts, and pizza. They need lots of volunteers for setup, cleanup, etc.

Traffic Task Force Update: Liz Fousler could not be here. Giovanna Spinale gave the update. We are short on morning help on Brunswick. We are looking for volunteers. Giovanna read a letter from Liz: The shifts are 8 to 8:20 and 1:45 to 2:00. When the crossing guard comes you are relieved. "No Parking" signs were put up at the end of last year. There is no parking on the school side of Brunswick from 7 to 10 a.m. We have had complaints of parents blocking crosswalks and driveways. Please do not encourage children to run up to the car by stopping in the crosswalk and stopping for your child. If you cannot find a parking spot right away, drive around the block or park further away. The parking lot is for staff members and buses only. Please use the sidewalk and crosswalks. In her letter, Liz thanked the PTO for funding the signs and thanked principal Clery for her clear explanation in the Reporter.

Connie Pinto Memorial Update: Beth Walsh introduced herself and spoke about Connie and how she had taught for several years and that she was a child oriented teacher. When she died at the age of 41, there was an outpouring of contributions, thankfulness, and celebrations of her life. Three concrete and glass mosaic benches were made for the park. Vandals twice destroyed the benches. The second time they were damaged more and one bench was cracked in half. When Connie's dad died recently, his family decided that in lieu of flowers or donations, all donations would be made to the Connie Fund. We now have some funding and we'd like to move the benches inside. The benches are now being put back together. Beth indicated that she would like to share one of the benches with the Franklin School where the Early Childhood Center is now housed. (Connie would be there now had she not died). She would like to bring the other two benches and plaque into the Roosevelt school. Mrs. Clery agreed that they could talk and find an appropriate place.

Treasurer's Report: Giovanna began by stating that we will go through the budget and once we go through it will be voted and we will consider requests for funds. Our treasurer got ill and had to leave so we asked Doreen Cincotta (past treasurer) if she would answer any questions.

Betsey Benagh read the Roosevelt PTO Budget 2008/2009 to those present. She spoke about the projected income and the fact that we do not know that we will actually receive that income. Betsey explained each category as she read the

amounts. There was some discussion as to the amount of the fee the PTO now needs to pay to be a member of the PTO, Inc. (\$2500). It was explained that it was estimated on the high side because if it is that high, we have to have the funds available.

There was a question about the \$1,500 for the principal's fund. Mrs. Clery explained that she's spent about \$700 of that money for materials she is using for reading comprehension strategies to use with each grade level at the Team Roosevelt Meetings.

Motion made to accept the budget as presented. Seconded and passed.

Requests for further funding. Mrs. Jones, Grade 4 Teacher, requested the MCAS tutoring funding from the PTO. She said that she has been having conversations with Mrs. Clery about how we may be able to find funding for this. If our school does not make the AYP it would affect each child in this school. Anything we can do to make this not happen is our duty. Numbers are not in our favor as much as last year. Tutoring sessions were held in 3, 4 and 5th grade in math. There was a 17% increase in the Advanced category. One student in Mrs. Jones' class went from Needs Improvement to Advanced. Sometimes we have classes with a lot of students with special needs and sometimes we have very few. It is also hard to compare tests from grade to grade. We try to address these issues in the tutoring sessions. Mrs. Jones further indicated that she has discussed ways to modify the tutoring programs. We are thinking about the possibility of having only 1 teacher per grade level instead of 2, perhaps limiting the number of students allowed in to the sessions. Sometimes we do not see the improvement we'd like to see. Mrs. Jones thinks the 4th grade test is more difficult than the 3rd grade test. We talked about further limiting the students. We talked about perhaps splitting the financial burden. If it was a pay per student program we would have to charge students \$60. We thought of perhaps charging about \$25 per child (the same as an after school program) and then asking the PTO to pay for the remainder. Susanna Zysk thanked Mrs. Jones for coming and bringing this topic forward as always. Susanna explained that in years past much of the funding we were able to provide was a result of the surplus from the golf tournament. That surplus is now gone. We received a recommendation from Chris Cassetelli, a Roosevelt parent and member of the School Committee, who recommended that the PTO fund a percentage and then the parents pay the remainder. Mrs. Jones responded. She indicated that based on current 4 and 5th graders, students who would be recommended (based on 3rd grade test scores, there are 15 students in 4th; 21 students fell into needs improvement in 5th grade. We have new students in 4th grade who have never taken MCAS before so the numbers could go up. We also looked at the funds available and maybe we should use 3rd grade test scores for the following year and limit the tutoring to grades 4 and 5. Susanna Zysk said that for a child chosen who has a financial hardship, the PTO would take that into consideration. Mrs. Jones said that the reality is some kids need more than others and this is our target group. Mrs. Clery posed a scenario where the PTO is willing to pitch in \$1,000 and we have 2 teachers one at 4th and one at 5th grade doing the tutoring twice a week - 6 hours per week per teacher = \$150 per week per teacher x 8 weeks is \$1200. Giovanna Spinale - speaking to Sue Jones - you have brought us different options but we're not going to vote on this tonight because a representative from the 3rd grade is not here tonight. We will table it for next meeting. Will plans for the next possible fundraisers be in place before the next PTO meeting? Question: Can't you just ask parents for \$5 instead of having all of these fundraisers? There was a discussion and suggestions made. Beth Walsh said that Karen McCarthy suggested that just like we auction off a spot out front, we should think about auctioning off a fundraiser immunity idol. There was a lot of discussion about how some parents would feel that their child would be entitled to receive whatever the donation funded. Maybe a letter should go out soliciting for funds for MCAS prep with no strings attached. Letter will indicate that no preference will be given to donors. Giovanna asked Sue Jones to come up with a letter to go out to families requesting a general donation for MCAS tutoring funding.

Doreen Cincotta asked if we could consider an alternative to a solicitation letter. What if we were to add a line item to the PTO budget at a flat amount and let the Principal, Mrs. Clery, and the teachers involved do whatever they can with that money. Susan Jones was asked her opinion of that suggestion. She said it was a great idea.

The Board acknowledged Susan Jones for her attendance at many PTO meetings and for her invaluable input with respect to many issues concerning the students of the Roosevelt School. The Board further acknowledged her devotion to her students and her support of their education. She was thanked for her dedication to the Roosevelt School students.

Susanna Zysk indicated that last year each teacher got \$400.00.

There was a Motion made to add a line item to the general expense budget for MCAS tutoring funding in the amount of \$1,500.00 to roll over each year, the Program to be decided by the principal and teachers. Seconded and passed.

Motion to approve September Minutes with correction of Liz Fousler to Liz Peart and Ant bullying to Anti-bullying. Seconded and passed.

Motion to adjourn. Seconded and passed. Adjourned at 9:35 p.m.