

Farmington River Elementary



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Thursday, March 10, 2016

Meeting Start: 3:15 pm

Motion made to approve minutes from February's meeting approved.

In attendance: Wendy Berman, President; Craig Drenga, Vice President; Kathy Adams, Secretary; Ilona Packie, Treasurer; Tom Nadolny, Principal; Meaghan Martin and Chris Keller, Faculty; Ashley Nelson, Aimeé MacGovern, Stacey Schultz and Sherry DeCelle, Parents / Committee Heads.

FOR OUR CALENDARS: Events

T Mar 15 Wendy, Kathy C., Kathy A. and Craig will attend PTA convention in Springfield

M May 2 – F May 6 Staff Appreciation Week

M May 16 – F May 20 Screen Free Week

F May 20 – Su May 22 1700s Colonial Soldier Reenactment by *Ye Old Lebanon Militia*

F June 3 Field Day (Rain Date: Th June 2)

FOR OUR CALENDARS: PTA Meetings, 3:15 pm in the School Library

Th Apr 14 April PTA Meeting

Th May 12 May PTA Meeting

FOR OUR CALENDARS: School Committee Meetings, 7 pm in the School Library

TBA April School Committee Meeting date to be announced on FRRSD website

ENDING SOON!

Target Rewards Program This program will end on May 14 of this year

Labels for Education Get your Labels in! This program will end in June of this year

PRESIDENT'S REPORT: Wendy

Scholastic Book Fair Wrap-Up

The Scholastic Book Fair was held during the week of Read Across America, Feb 29 - March 4. \$2,772.33 has been recorded in Scholastic Book Sales, plus \$51.99 generously added to the Donations box. We earned \$1,576.78 in Scholastic Dollars.

Held on Wednesday 3/2, Read Across America itself went well, thanks to the continued organizing efforts of Kathy Couch. Staff Room set-up and display was very creative; she really went all out, according to positive feedback by Chris Keller. Aimée MacGovern shall be taking over this annual celebration in honor of Dr. Seuss's birthday next year, so Kathy C. has been sharing the learning of the ropes with her.

Revisit Proceeds from Fall Online Book Fair (net \$266.29)

We received a net of \$266.29 from the amount raised during the Fall Online Book Fair. It was proposed we use this amount toward purchasing books from the teacher's Wish Lists since not all teachers received books on their lists. The proposal was reviewed and agreed upon unanimously. We did originally specify the Scholastic fundraiser be intended to benefit the Library.

Family Fun Night Wrap-Up

Event held on Friday night 3/4, at the end of the week of Read Across America, Feb 29 - March 4. Bryson Lang, the Juggler for Scholastic Book Fair's Family Fun Night was here a good long time. He was completely self-sufficient, and dealt well with wandering Kindergartener. There was just enough food with 5 party pizzas; leftover dessert was placed in Teacher's Room. Wendy kept a list of how many pizzas we should supply and how many RSVP respondents, and uploaded it to Google Drive, so as to not reinvent the wheel every time we plan a party. Seating was great at performance, padded area for kids in front worked well for his floor front-of-stage performance. Very intimate.

Sunshine Fund

Staff member Star O'Brien has experienced a tremendous amount of loss in her family very recently; her mother as well as her family dog each passed away unexpectedly, all within the same week. Wendy has a card expressing condolences from the PTA; a donation will be submitted to the Otis Fire Department on behalf of the PTA.

VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT: Craig

Snack Bar Outcome.

Snack Bar Update

A reminder that the long-running Teacher's Lounge Snack Bar has been in question recently—whether to maintain it as an ongoing feature provided by the PTA, or to discontinue the service. Based on the Honor System, \$377 had been collected, but a \$160 deficiency remains, the source of which remains a mystery. The Snack Bar had operated seamlessly for years; there had been formerly enough money to pay Karen Yvon for childcare during PTA meetings. In the past, it was never short, according to Sherry, and even tended to bring in a surplus.

Craig checked into possible installation of vending machines. At prices ranging \$1,500-5,000, it was deemed very expensive. A 10-can soda machine costs hundreds of dollars. Suggestion is that it may be best for teachers to bring in their own snacks, according to cost projections being prohibitive. A vending system called Tom's is potentially available to stock goodies; however, it is based on the Honor System, which has recently failed. Ilona performed an analysis of what was in the box, and what was sold; it seemed to jive, so the discrepancy remains unknown. The whole point was to break even, and end up a little bit ahead to pay Karen Yvon.

Tom reached out to the Coca Cola company, who can bring in a vending machine at a moment's notice: however, they can bring in beverages, only. Nothing would come out of pocket; Coke's operation provides a percentage back. No initial charge. There would be a choice of about six beverages.

Tom can order the beverage vending machine to have on the premises within the next week by Coke; he is waiting on the decision from our PTA meeting consensus.

There are other vendors who can provide snack machines. It is important to note that some vendors have a minimum sales-of-product rule, necessitating items to be sold prior to spoiling before sales. A snack machine would be good that offered a list of products to total up with a pick-and-choose system, for which we could make space in the Staff Room. There are presently two refrigerators, and they always seem full; we may need to clean out one fridge and consolidate items within the two down to one refrigerator, in order to make room.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Ilona

State of the Treasury

With an initial \$360 outlay to Otis Ridge, and \$64.74 from the Target Rewards program (soon to be ending this spring on May 14), not knowing what we shall yet be paying the Otis Ridge Ski Program (\$3,900 range, for at least 60 kids, at \$65 per child for six weeks), plus taking out prize money for the Cash Calendar—we are calculated to have \$14,252 in the PTA coffers. Knox has not yet submitted their invoice for the Chili Cook Off; it was suggested they could be just generous and donating back to the PTA, but it is yet to be seen. The Knox did make good money off of beverage bar sales that night.

To include and provide a tally of Family Fun Night, we await all expense reimbursement forms to come in.

Box Tops: \$887 is expected in total to arrive by check next week, which is in line with what we usually receive annually (typically about \$800 per year is received). Important note to flag parents with, by via email and/or within the next PTA newsletter: the importance of *properly* submitting Box Tops, according to their rules. Karen Yvon, who coordinates the program, has flagged the PTA that she is running into families mistakenly putting extra "bonus" Box Tops on a sheet (for a total of more than 10 allowed per sheet); this is unacceptable to the Box Tops program. Also, if just ONE expired Box Top gets placed on a sheet of 10, the *entire sheet* will be thrown out. This will reduce our potential for proceeds by wasting one dollar per sheet that is eliminated. Box Tops money goes into the general PTA fund; it has not historically been set aside to be earmarked for one particular activity.

Chris would like to buy an item for the science program, to be further discussed.

SECRETARY'S REPORT: Kathy A.

No new business or updates to report.

OLD BUSINESS

Cash Calendar Recap: Sherry

We stand at having raised \$13,440 for the PTA account, in our largest annual fundraiser. Second-grade sales were stellar; expenses were very reasonable at KwikPrint; and prizes expense is about \$1,000. James Adams was added to the roster of families selling over 40 tickets. Results are being submitted to the Otis Observer; all contributors have been acknowledged in the previous issue.

Indoor Recess Kits: Wendy

The Third and Fifth Grades have provided feedback, preferring something quiet and not very intrusive. It was mentioned that board games tend not to be used. Meaghan has mentioned kids love to make things with pieces and items such as a set of magnetic balls, and suggested that we could perhaps find more of these items. Girls seem mostly to prefer to draw.

Indoor First Aid Kits and "Go" Bags Update: Wendy

Indoor First Aid Kits and "Go" Bags have been filled by every classroom, with at least 3 mylar blankets in each bag.

NEW BUSINESS

PreK / Kindergarten event: Wendy

We have a new request from the Preschool, asking if the PTA will help fund a performance by Marmalade Puppets. We spent \$520 for Family Fun Night on entertainment; however, this event was open for ALL ages. It can be a slippery slope in providing full funding for enrichment events and activities that are exclusive to certain ages and classrooms. Therefore, the PTA is not expecting to fully fund the Marmalade Puppets for Preschool, but provide some support we can all agree on. If the upper grades get to do something that the lower grades do not, then there is equity in the equation; but so far, Family Fun Night has been open to ALL grades. Perhaps we should look at it as targeting smaller groups and smaller amounts, as we did with Flying Deer.

The Preschool can apply for a grant, and PTA can kick in \$100-150 to help cover costs of the puppet troupe, because the Preschool was not invited to participate in Flying Deer, as was suggested and recommended by Sherry and Tom. The PTA is willing to provide across the board, but be equitable to all groups fairly. \$150 was the final agreed-upon amount.

Jacob's Pillow Opportunity: Wendy

Wendy was contacted by Jacob's Pillow about collaborating on a t-shirt design contest and participating on a parade this year to highlight our area's music and dance offerings. We do wish to highlight participation and outreach with other schools; however, in being realistic, summer vacation is a time that is difficult to garner parent involvement and support in school activities. Kelly Couch has recently won a t-shirt design contest for Jacob's Pillow; participants would wear her designs and the Pillow would contribute to the event, as well. This event would be participating in the Pittsfield 4th of July Parade, a long-running, established huge parade in the

Northeast; however, it was pointed out that once school is out for summer, parent participation goes WAY down. Walking in the parade is one thing, but helping create a float would look impossible to garner an organized support effort for. The consensus was to decline the Pillow's offer.

Tyson Rewards Program: Ashley

The Tyson Rewards Program is kind of like Box Tops. The PTA would receive .24 cents for each label submitted from chicken products, and we must include at least 100 labels per submission. This rewards program is participatory, and can earn us up to \$12,000 per year. Since we are losing both Campbell's Labels for Education and the Target Rewards programs due to their being discontinued, it is perhaps something to look into. It was suggested to place this idea in the PTA newsletter.

Classroom Tools: Stacey

Stacey is introducing the idea of including stationary bicycle pedaling beneath children's desks for reading to assist reading and fluency with kids that have trouble with these skills, and wishes to poll teachers to see how they feel about trying it. The price is \$20 per stationary bicycle pedaling apparatus, but it cost much less for a bulk purchase.

Concern was expressed about pedaling potentially becoming a distraction. It was mentioned that according to a classroom test study, the pedals could not be heard in the classroom tested in and the pedals ended up not creating an unintended distraction. That said, the apparatus has only been tested on the more fidgety kids in the test classroom, i.e., those playing with items in their desks or fiddling with things in their hands. In the test setting, it seemed to be working, but much needs to be considered and researched.

Tom suggested possibly piloting one in each room. A key point was made by Meaghan that some kids do not need the extra distraction, and we would not want for them to become reliant on it. Tom will send an email to the other teachers to see if they may like to try it. Sherry suggested two in each classroom would not be a huge financial burden, but only if teachers in fact express interest before our committing to buying them.

Stacey will send the link for the stationary bicycle pedaling machines to Chris. Gold's Gym puts out one of these items, sold at Walmart; one was purchased, and its box is downstairs in Meaghan's room. Mrs. Gangell might have some fitness grant resources, suggested Chris. It was mentioned that someone at Undermountain school may have been able to secure a grant for the purchase of these items for a few classrooms.

Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee is made up of four PTA members who serve to find and fill PTA board positions. This committee shall start by seeing who is willing to serve again, revealing what positions are available to be filled. The Committee cannot be comprised of officers. With \$14,000 in the coffers, Sherry issued a reminder to the Board that if there is not enough energy for someone to step up and carry the torch, then the PTA has to shut down and spend down the account. There has to be a carry-it-forward message in the presentation of the Nominating Committee. There was a suggestion for Wendy to put out email or letter pleading with parents.

Among current board members and positions, Craig indicated he is willing to serve as Vice President again. Having each served for four years, Kathy and Ilona announced their board positions as Secretary and Treasurer will open up and become available for new members to take over.

The Nominating Committee has been designated as Tom Nadolny, Alicia Dunaj, Jess Drenga and Craig Drenga.

Screen Free Week

The Otis Recreation Center is willing to again do Bingo on Monday night, May 16 of Screen Free Week. Chris is willing to again do his hike, but has a huge undertaking of his own with the 1700s Colonial Soldier Reenactment by *Ye Old Lebanon Militia* the following weekend at the FRRSD campus; he thus requested his slot be timed for early in the week. Chris also requested we schedule an off-campus event on Friday night, so no parking will take place down in the lower field, where his weekend Reenactment activity will take place.

We scaled down to 3 items last year: bingo, the hike, and Berkshire South Swim and Dinner on Friday night.

Teacher Appreciation Week

For Teacher Appreciation Week, Wendy will email the group regarding ideas and to solicit a chair person/chair people and volunteers.

Meeting Adjourned: 4:10 pm