

PTA Meeting Minutes

Thoreau Middle School

Tuesday, February 10, 2015

Meeting Called to Order: 9:35 a.m.

Conducting: Anne-Stuart Kirkhorn

In attendance: Allison King, Cindy Norton, Teralyn Carlson, Tom Frazier, Elizabeth Gauthier, Alison Wilbricht, Kristin Parker, Elaine Cudney, Alex Keam, Rhonda VanDiest, Bea Wolman, Tanja Beahn, Allison Blackman, Patty Daley, Tim Webster, Sean Sinclair, Sue Sheehan, Stephanie Bollini, Hafsa Ali, Principal Hood, Kathy Smith, Jane Miscavage, Anne-Stuart Kirkhorn and Corinne Bowen.

The November minutes were reviewed and passed.

A quick review was made for the upcoming Parent Program Series (some of which had to be rescheduled due to weather cancellations). Program details are online.

- Depressed and Stressed Teens February 24 at 7:00 p.m.
- Understanding the Teenage Brain March 24 at 7:00 p.m.
- Social Media Savvy April 28 at 7:00 p.m.

Other noteworthy mentions were:

- No Drama Dinner – Social Burger – February 11th / Chipotle – March 10th
- The PTA Bylaws on up for renewal and a copy is on the PTA website for review.
- We are looking for ways to start welcoming the family of rising 7th graders.
- A coordinator is needed for a Kilmer – Thoreau Basketball Game – April 16th.
- PTA Elections will be held April 28th. We are looking for a nominating committee.
- Fundraising is underway for post-renovation projects. We need volunteers for a rebate program, brick fundraiser, auction and to solicit corporate donation.

The meeting was then turned over to Principal Hood.

Principal Hood first mentioned that he was amazed at the resiliency of the students during the construction process. They seemed to take all of the changes in stride. As far as the progress of the construction goes, most of the work is outside currently, with 60,000 square feet of additional space being added. [He showed photos and diagrams during the presentation that are all available on the school website]. There are three phases of construction planned and Phase 1 is running on schedule. A beautiful new library is planned and the old library will be converted into a technology space. All of the new buildings will connect to portions of the old building.

The school currently has 840 students. When the reconstruction is done, the new space will hold 1,250 students. The administration had wanted an auditorium, but that is no longer being done with new construction, so there will be a large courtyard instead where students can cross to other parts of the building.

We watched a short YouTube video called Did You Know, showing the increasingly fast-paced and changing world that our students live in and the need for technology and innovation in

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their curriculum. Classroom furniture and technology are two big expenses that will not be covered by existing renovation costs and the administration appreciates the efforts by the PTA to help raise money for those items.

The AAP Program (community-based) will stay as it is for the present time. It could potentially become a designated center site as we will have more capacity and less students than Kilmer and Luther Jackson Middle Schools.

Thoreau is still waiting to hear on the start time for next year. The length of the school day and the number of class periods will stay the same.

Eagle Time has had a different format this year from years past, due to realizing that it was not serving the academic purposes that it had been created for. 8th graders who experienced the "Time to Soar" have questioned the change and Principal Hood has been meeting with his "Eagle Forum" (a committee of students) to discuss ideas.

A parent expressed frustration that sometimes middle schoolers are spoon-fed so much of the information that they need to learn that the transition to high school and being required to take notes and find information in textbooks is overwhelming to kids who have never learned those skills. There is also frustration with parents on not being able to find appropriate resources when helping students with homework. The county pays for textbooks (online and hard copy), but few teachers use them. Principal Hood said that he is working closely with Mr. Merrell from Madison High School to determine what the middle school can do to better prepare students to succeed in high school.

School Board Member – Kathy Smith

Kathy Smith made a stop by our PTA Meeting to introduce herself and encourage us to use the school board's website to find information and gain access to herself and her contemporaries on the school board. She encouraged the use of the FCPS Mobile APP.

The proposed calendar for next school year will be voted on this month, so suggestions need to be made soon. We were encouraged to advocate the board of supervisors and state legislators to fund schools. The amount of money a school district gets is based on the wealth of the area in which it lies, so even though the amount of money Fairfax County gets is high, when you break it down per pupil, it is less than many other areas in the state.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:18 a.m.