



# PTA

**Date of PTA Meeting:** September 10, 2019

**Location:** Thoreau Middle School

**Attendees:** Rebecca Aguilar, Yusef Azimi, Stephanie Bollini, Bandita Dahal, Missy Dixon, Holly Dubbeling, Beth Eachus, Sahar Granholm, Yoonmi Ha, Audra Hoebler, Lillian Huang, Shree Kandel, Stella Karowski, Lisa Kelso, Nausheen Khan, Liz Kimbrall, Andrea Kramer, Sarah Lundquist, Alessia McIntosh, Elmas Mehmed, Karla Mihalak, Mary Louise Nicklas, Ravi Myneni, Wendy Pearson, Alecia Pflughardt, Bernadette Philip, Samantha Rayburn, Michelle Rios, Karen Rose, Basel Saleh, Dawn-Marie Singleton, Irina Smirnoff, Rachel Thompson, Suzanne Zulauf

Andrea called the meeting to order at 9:35 am. Wendy Pearson presented the minutes from the May 23, 2019, PTA meeting. There was a motion to approve the minutes by Missy Dixon and Dawn-Marie Singleton seconded, and the minutes were approved.

## **Principal's Report – Principal Azimi**

This is his fifth year serving as principal. He said that he is thankful for great parental involvement and that Thoreau strives to be welcoming and nurturing to students and families. He and Mrs. Aguilar will attend each PTA meeting. Mr. Azimi included four items in his report this month.

1. He thanked the PTA, especially for Staff Breakfast and Back to School Night dinner.
2. Celebratory news: Thoreau MS will be recognized on Thursday for Governor's Index Award (as we have for the last 10 + years).
3. History and statistics: Thoreau has enjoyed being one of the smallest Middle Schools in the county. Five years ago, we had 868, we have 1315 students today. Four years ago, Thoreau added 80,000 sq. ft of space and the boundary line was changed last Fall to alleviate crowding at Luther Jackson MS. TMS welcomed over 400 students over the last two years! We've hired 57 new staff members over the past two years. He personally looks for teachers who love teenagers and are well-qualified to teach the content. While the school was not completely staffed on opening day, due to national teacher shortages and specific area needs, Thoreau is fully staffed today with 145 staff at Thoreau.
4. Academic focus—2016-19 our two areas of focus were Project-Based Learning and our Executive Functioning Program. Mr. Azimi feels that these two areas are solidly established here at Thoreau. Those initiatives are sustained. Next year's areas of focus are Social Emotional Learning and Digital Citizenship. Teachers are developing these programs this year.

## **Student Services - Rebecca Aguilar**

1. We brought in a fifth counselor this year due to increased enrollment. Counsellors are offering introduction lessons through Science classes. This Fall we have a General Wellness Initiative. This year we have a special lesson on re-establishing a sense of School Community through building a common understanding. The model of the Restorative Circle is used for classroom discussion. What does "Every Student Having a Safe Learning Environment" look like? How can we build that? The core of our work is building relationships and a sense of community.

2. On October 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> graders have a Wellness Screening. It is a county-wide practice that continues through, High School and is administered every other year. There is an opt-out available. There is always a Parent Portal that is available to all parents, regardless of student participation. More information about how to access the Parent Portal will be included in this week's "Thoreau Matters". The lesson is based on the acronym ACT (Acknowledge, Care, Tell). If a student is flagged as at-risk for depression. Counselling Department meets with every student who is flagged, in order of pressing priority. Parents are always informed if Counselors meet with students. Mrs. Aguilar emphasized that counselors offer many ways for kids to connect and talk about their concerns, about a friend or themselves, emotionally or academically. Counselling Department seeks to be responsive to student needs.

(A parent took the opportunity to thank Administration for banning digital device use at Thoreau. Mr. Azimi emphasized the county-wide nature of the guidelines that all principals received containing guidelines for Elementary, Middle and High School expectations.)

3. The Food Pantry is up and running. We pack bags for kids every Friday. Thank you for your support of this initiative. As enrollment has increased, so has the need for food for others. Ms. Aguilar indicated that school counselors pack bags each week with meal staples for the whole family. Health and wellness items, including feminine hygiene products are also distributed to those who need them. A link for donating to the Food Pantry is included on Thoreau Matters emails and on the school website. Brown bags and plastic bags are always needed.

Rachel Thompson asked Mrs. Aguilar about After School Programs, particularly the lack of athletic offerings in Middle School. Thoreau's After School Program is a partnership between the School District and County Government. A new person is in line for the Directorship of this program, hopefully to be approved within two days. Late buses will begin Sept. 23, operating on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. After School Programs are mostly open enrollment, with some understandable exceptions (like Cooking Club). Tuesdays and Fridays after school time is also available for make-up work with teachers. Students are picked up by parents or walk home. After School Program enrollment has been around 300 students. Most programs are run by Thoreau teachers. Program listings are on Thoreau's homepage every week. They are also listed on Blackboard and on the PTA Facebook page. Students can also see the schedule posted in the Cafeteria. A parent asked what the Cell Phone Policy will be during the After School Programs. Mr. Azimi indicated that he is working with those guidelines with the new hire.

#### **PTA President's Report – Andrea Kramer 10:20**

Andrea listed the name of our current PTA Committee Chairs. We are speaking with potential volunteers to review the Thoreau PTA By-laws, as we are every five years. School Store is still in need of Committee Chair. It also serves as a PTA transaction area. When the store is up and running, there will be a SignUpGenius for parent volunteers to serve during the lunch hour.

We are still looking for Committee Chairs for Crosstown Hoops. We are hosting this year at Madison HS. We still need a Coordinator for the online PTA directory. We work with an outside company to produce this.

Andrea thanked parents who volunteered at Open House in various roles, including Mary Louise Nicklas distributing School Supply Kits, Natacha Moore for preparing the Spirit Wear selections, Karla Mihalak and Mary Louise Nicklas in Hospitality for the Welcome Back Staff Breakfast as well as the Back to School Night Dinner and Stephanie Bollini for coordinating Membership. She encouraged families to Save the Date for the 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Family Dinner on Thursday, November 14, 6-8 pm at Thoreau. Tickets will be sold online.

Andrea highlighted Thoreau's association with the Town of Vienna's Teen Center Club Phoenix, located in the Vienna Community Center at 120 Cherry Street SE. They offer after school programs and hangout space for students in grades 6-12. They are partnering with us to provide some Parent Education Programs this year. They are celebrating their 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on Friday, September 27 with afternoon and evening events open to the public.

### **Treasurer's Report – Amy Vernon (presented by Andrea Kramer)**

Audit was completed in late August by Karyn Patino, Amy Vernon and Anne Winters. Records for 2018-19 found to be complete and in order with recommendations: Written budget reports to membership at all meetings, bank statement reconciliation by a non-singer volunteer on a monthly basis and speedier deposit of funds. Finding: \$888.63 difference in expected 2018-19 ending balance, discovered 2017-18 ending balance in QuickBooks contained errors. This error was in our favor and the money is in the Thoreau Account. A motion was made by Sarah Lundquist to approve the Audit and was seconded by Lisa Kelso.

The 2019-20 Proposed Budget was presented. Attention was drawn to a decrease in anticipated income from School Store, due to a later start. Beth Eachus asked about the \$2000 proposed line item for 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Party, commenting that this event has historically been difficult to keep at budget. Missy Dixon suggested that we revisit at a later meeting the budget items for both the Eighth Grade Party and also the \$250 budgeted for Food Pantry. Michelle Rios motioned to approve the budget. Missy Dixon seconded the motion. The budget passed as proposed.

### **Committee Reports**

**Membership:** Stephanie Bollini presented that \$8547 in donations, over \$5000 in membership dues collected for 207 family membership and 61 single memberships. Our membership and no-fuss fundraiser income provide the bulk of our programming money, as well as augmenting the furniture and other parts of the school. Aside from required national dues, our money goes back to student programs, family programs and supporting staff in a variety of initiatives. Stephanie explained that our No Fuss Fundraiser takes the place of having any student do Direct Sales. Donations can be accepted throughout the year, either online, Pay4SchoolStuff or by check.

**Dining for Dollars:** Missy Dixon announced that Dining for Dollars will take place on September 24, from 10:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. at Mod Pizza in Vienna. October's D4D will be at Foster's Grille in Vienna (11 a.m. – 9 p.m.) Please support the school by eating out. Flyers will be distributed to remind families of these opportunities.

**Box Tops**—Now two ways to “clip” Box Tops—scan your receipt. Giant Grocery has discontinued its A+ Rewards Program.

**Spirit wear**—57 orders were placed. These will be distributed at lunch through the School Store. There will be another ordering opportunity later in the Fall before the holidays.

### **New Business**

Free Student Bus Passes are available for Middle and High School Students to use Fairfax Connector and Fairfax Cue. There is now a bus that goes down Park Street and stops at the Community Center. Applications can be picked up from the school office.

Stephanie Bollini announced that Madison's Homecoming Parade will be on Friday, October 4<sup>th</sup>. at 2 pm beginning at Vienna Presbyterian Church on Maple Avenue. That night at 7 pm Madison HS is the football game.

Hospitality Committee is looking for additional volunteers.

**Adjourn PTA Meeting:** Andrea ended the meeting at 10:57 am.