

Danbury City-Wide PTO Council
Meeting Minutes
Monday, March 6, 2017
6:30 PM
Administrative Center, 63 Beaver Brook Road

Attendance: Rich Matzinger (C-W Co-President/DHS), Janet Hamilton (C-W Treasurer/DHS), Rachel Chaleski (C-W Secretary/AIS), Dr. Sal Pascarella (Superintendent), Ralph Pietrafesa (BOE), Scott Keating (Great Plain), Paul Salvatore (Great Plain), Sharon Amalfitano (Shelter Rock), Lauren Archiere (WMSA), Chrissy Maruffi (Pembroke), Genene Morehouse (Pembroke), Edward Kim (Sky Zone)

Call to Order

- ✓ The meeting was called to order by Rich and began at 6:33pm.

Approval of Minutes

- ✓ Paul made a motion to approve the February minutes. Scott seconded.

Sky Zone Presentation (Edward Kim on behalf of Chris George)

- ✓ Sky Zone is an indoor trampoline park located in Bethel. It is also a fitness center that holds fitness classes, hosts birthday parties and fundraisers. An organization, such as a PTO, can host an event at Sky Zone and will receive a percentage back based on number of attendees. If over 100 attendees, the group receives 25% of the proceeds; if less than 100 attendees, the profit is scaled down. The profit minimum is 15%. The group may choose to coordinate activities or food. Parents can also get involved with a Sky class. It is for all ages. There are multiple activities, such as basketball, dodge ball, etc. that promote fitness. Fundraisers are only held on weekdays, including Fridays. The facility is open from 4 - 8pm. Several area groups have been successful in the past. There is ample parking. Attendees must sign a waiver, as they would at a birthday party. The waiver is an insurance requirement that can be done online by a parent/guardian of anyone under the age of 18. Sky Zone can provide a link to the waiver to forward to the group. Business cards were distributed with contact information for any further questions.

Treasurer's Report (Lynne on behalf of Janet)

- ✓ The current balance remains at \$958.20. The PTOs that still have not paid dues are from: Rogers Park, Mill Ridge, Ellsworth, Hayestown, Morris St., Park Ave., and South Street. Janet confirmed that another notice was sent. It was suggested by Dr. Sal that the principals be contacted to make them aware.
- ✓ Paul made a motion to accept the treasury report, seconded by Scott.

Superintendent's Report

- ✓ The state has begun public hearings in the budget process. Dr. Sal and team have testified several times on behalf of Danbury, primarily concerning fair education funding.

Under the Governor's proposed budget, there are 33 towns that will benefit favorably, including Danbury; but, because it calls for cuts to about 130 towns, Dr. Sal feels the likelihood that it will pass is slim. We will not know the final budget until mid-June. For Danbury, the Board of Education approved their budget, which will be presented to the Mayor. The budget does not currently include cuts to FTE's or programs. Surrounding towns are reducing their budgets based on anticipated cuts from the state. If anyone would like to testify or submit written testimony, please let Dr. Sal know and he will provide information. Meetings have been posted regularly. Michael Ferguson, who serves on the Danbury Board of Education and on the CT Education Committee, is also someone who can assist to provide information or answer questions.

- ✓ There was recently a "walk-out" of about 400 students at the high school. The way in which it happened was unfortunate. Dr. Sal said there are other ways to express views that are more acceptable. There were several students who stayed behind afterwards. Some students behaved inappropriately and disciplinary actions were applied in those instances. Students who were late or absent to class were marked as such. The school is trying to educate students about the occurrence. There is an open forum for groups/clubs at the high school, which provides students a platform to express their views. Any group that has a sponsor may be established with some restrictions. There was also a recent walk-out at Stamford schools, but the students involved the principals and it was organized in such a way that it was a meaningful activity. No one was hurt at the walk-out at Danbury High School. It is still being reviewed by administration and police to determine how better to respond in the future.
- ✓ Dr. Sal expressed concern for all students in this politically charged time. He is worried that kids will be used by different political sides. Dr. Sal provided the PTOs with a copy of a memo that went to all Danbury administrators that provided guidance and a statement from the Governor regarding student immigration status and information.
- ✓ Rich asked if the media has a right to be present at the school. Dr. Sal explained that the media can be on public property, but requires permission to enter the building.
- ✓ There was discussion about the high school group that represents Black Lives Matter. Students were required to attend an assembly during advisory and given survey questionnaires at the end. Dr. Sal did not know specifics about the assembly, but will reach out to Principal Donovan.
- ✓ Ralph asked Rich to send an e-mail with his questions and he will look into providing answers. Ralph understands the motive for the walk-out, but the Board of Education also has responsibility for the entire school population.
- ✓ Dr. Sal stated that the high school construction is still going well.
- ✓ He also stated that the district is considering additional modules, as a recent enrollment study shows further expected growth. The original proposal for the new middle school planned for 800 students, but was ultimately built for 600. So, modules are being considered for the middle schools.
- ✓ Dr. Sal spoke about possible involvement with a charter school, specifically looking at a partnership with Jim Maloney. Mr. Maloney leads the CT Institute for Communities, Inc.

(CIFC). The Board of Education held a workshop. The partnership is still being considered by the board. Dr. Sal said it would help with resources.

- ✓ Paul asked about the new bus application. The Versatran App is being used at the middle and high school levels, but not yet for the elementary schools. Student Identification numbers will be printed on report cards, so that parents can add their children within the app. Lauren said that the app would not allow her to add a second student ID. Dr. Sal asked that she would send him an e-mail about that. Other feedback was very positive in the accuracy of the system.
- ✓ If there is a morning weather delay, the scheduled early dismissal is cancelled.

City-Wide PTO Facebook Page (<https://www.facebook.com/DanburyCityWidePTO>) and Website (<http://danburycitywidepto.digitalpto.com>)

- ✓ There were no updates this month. Any questions, please contact Rachel.

Updates from School Representatives

- ✓ The Shelter Rock PTO held a fundraiser at the 99 Restaurant. It went well, but was scheduled during restaurant week. They have a Titans Hockey fundraiser in two weeks. The Butter Braids fundraiser began March 1. For the past several years, they have done a clothing drive, but will consider doing a donation drive with Savers. The drop-off is done at the store location, which saves space at the school.
- ✓ Last Thursday was Dr. Seuss Day at Great Plain. Parents, police and firemen were invited to read to the students. Today begins the Butter Braids fundraiser. Next week, the Square 1 Art sale begins. They are doing a Sock Hop for grades K-2 that will be held in the gym. The Apex Fun Run begins on March 27.
- ✓ At Westside Middle School Academy, there was a dance to support the theater musical production of Cinderella. It was held in the gym and was very successful. The PTO held a fundraiser at Buffalo Wild Wings. There will also be a Bounce fundraiser at the end of March. After a discussion about insurance, Lauren will look into their policy. The Student Council is hosting a hypnotist show. Tickets are \$10. The Cinderella production will show on March 22 and 24 at the Ives Hall on White Street. Tickets are on sale online. The site will be posted to the WMSA PTO website. Rachel will post it through the City-wide PTO Facebook page. Rich will share it through DHS.
- ✓ The Pembroke PTO held a Bounce fundraiser. It went well, despite advertising incorrect times. The PTO raised \$337. Bounce gives 40% of the proceeds. Their Staff and Teacher Raffle made over \$2k. Tickets were \$5. Students enjoyed assemblies by storyteller Jonathan Kruk to celebrate Read Across America on March 2. Chrissy highly recommends this program for grades K - 5. They held 3 assemblies; each ran for 45 minutes with 10 minutes at the end for Q&A's. Next week, they begin a Butter Braids fundraiser. Square 1 Art sales will also begin soon. Their annual talent show that is usually held in May will be held in March. The school is working with the Cub Scout group to allow any of its students to participate in their science fair.
- ✓ Last Monday, the DHS PTO held a presentation about internet safety and awareness, which had about 40 attendees. The police lieutenant did a great job and shared a lot of

information with a Q&A session. Rich will look into acquiring the power point presentation to share online. The next meeting is in April and will include a teenage driving safety presentation. The PTO is working with the same police lieutenant, as well as Thayer driving school. There will also be a raffle. The final May meeting is titled "Parent to Parent," as it is geared toward parents of incoming freshman and focuses on advice and tips from experienced high school parents.

- ✓ The AIS PTO reverted back to monthly meetings, instead of every other month. The March meeting will be held tomorrow evening. There will be a Titans Hockey Night, offering discounted tickets. The event is to build community and not for the purpose of fundraising. To celebrate Read Across America week, a spirit week was held in conjunction with Dr. Seuss' birthday. For every day of the week, there was a different theme based on a Dr. Seuss book. Sharon mentioned that the Shelter Rock Titans Hockey Night was the same as AIS. This was not mentioned at the time of booking. There were a few parents that have children in both schools.

Other Discussion

- ✓ Dr. Sal offered that 6 states have integrated lessons into their drivers' education to teach students how to react when stopped by the police. This might be a topic of interest for the DHS PTO presentation.
- ✓ Rachel recently testified at a public hearing in Hartford. She urged parents to do the same and share the story of Danbury's unique challenges. Unfortunately, there is the misconception that surrounding towns are being cut to "bail out" big cities, like Danbury, and this is not the case. While surrounding districts are challenged with school closings and redistricting due to declining enrollment, our enrollment continues to grow. Among our area towns, the perception of an overcrowded classroom may be 18 students, while there are 27 in a Danbury classroom. Ralph supported this with his experience from CAFE conventions. Some towns may have to cut extracurricular activities, while we are struggling to retain teachers. Danbury needs a strong representation during this budget season. Parents need to be a loud voice for our kids.
- ✓ Dr. Sal said there is the possibility that all magnet schools will have to comply with racial balance regulations. Dr. Sal recently submitted written testimony of the negative impact this would have on our schools. Current law requires an open lottery.
- ✓ Danbury was recognized for 6 Schools of Distinction, as measured by academic growth. Dr. Sal will forward the press release to all PTO presidents. Those schools were Ellsworth, Hayestown, Mill Ridge, Morris Street, Park Avenue and South Street.
- ✓ Rich asked members for ideas for the CoDA booth sponsored by the City-wide PTO. Members can e-mail him with any ideas or suggestions. Ralph suggested sand art. Lauren will send Rich a link to purchase supplies.
- ✓ There was a question asked about snow removal at Pembroke to allow students to have outdoor recess during the winter season. Dr. Sal advised that the PTO should not get involved and the principal should send him the request.

Next Meetings (All meetings are open to the public)

- ✓ Board of Education Meetings: March 8 and 22 at 7pm
- ✓ City-Wide PTO: April 3, 2017 at 6:30pm

Adjournment

- ✓ The meeting adjourned at 7:41pm.

Respectfully submitted by,
Rachel Chaleski
City-Wide PTO Secretary