

Danbury City-Wide PTO Council  
Meeting Minutes - No Quorum  
Monday, June 5 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 (Board of Education Chair), Sharon Amalfitano (Shelter Rock), Chrissy Maruffi (Pembroke), Kathleen Hock (King Street), Lisa Ruffles (King Street), Joan Strauss (King Street), Kristen Welko (Sacred Heart University), Via Phone: Lynne Lukasik (C-W Co-President/DHS)

Call to Order

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

Welcome, Introductions and Updates

- ✓ Rich welcomed members to the last meeting of the school year. Introductions were made at this time. There were a few new members present to represent King Street School. Kristen observed the meeting as a student of Sacred Heart University. She provided the board with a letter from the Isabelle Farrington College of Education, which explained Field Experiences as a requirement for their teacher candidates.

Approval of Minutes

- ✓ Minutes from the May meeting were distributed and reviewed. The minimum number of members to hold a quorum was not met.

Treasurer's Report

- ✓ The previous balance was \$958.20. Donations of \$75 from the CoDA Festival were deposited. Park Avenue paid a total of \$50 in dues for this year and next year. \$435.51 was spent on the sand art supplies for the CoDA Festival. The current balance is \$647.69.
- ✓ Janet was contacted by the Ellsworth PTO, who is expected to pay dues. She also just received a contact for the Rogers Park PTO.
- ✓ Rich distributed copies of a news article, "Teacher of the Year Resigns Amid Probe of PTO Funds," about possible mishandling of PTO funds by a Wolcott teacher. This ties in with previous discussions by the City-Wide PTO on using financial controls and best treasury practices. Rich reminded members that the City-Wide PTO can be used as a resource and is willing to help other PTO's.
- ✓ The floor was opened for comments and questions. There were none.

Superintendent's Report

- ✓ Dr. Sal invited Ralph to speak. On behalf of the Board of Education, Ralph thanked the City-Wide PTO and all individual PTO's for all the work they do.

- ✓ The 2017-18 calendar was approved. The school year will start after Labor Day. The district is already looking at the following year, which will probably go back to the traditional start before Labor Day. Dr. Sal emphasized the importance of the Professional Development on Tuesdays. Although the goal is to create a rhythmic and systemic calendar, he realizes those days can be somewhat disruptive. There have been some modifications made due to the tremendous struggle of substitute coverage. There is some embedded PD within the calendar that extends the school year and gives cause to additional instruction, like the day before Thanksgiving. Dr. Sal will provide the proposed 2018-19 school calendar at the next City-Wide PTO meeting in September.
- ✓ The construction work at the high school is still going well. It is on schedule to open one year from September.
- ✓ Since the modules at Shelter Rock were installed, the district is looking to place more at other schools due to growing enrollment. The middle schools are again particularly challenged. The district originally recommended the opening of Westside Academy to accommodate 800 students, however, the city planned for 600. The other middle schools are each at about 1,000 students and could reach 1,100-1,200. Rented space was considered, but there is nothing available.
- ✓ With no state budget, there is not really one for the district to operate under. The district sought \$5.3MM and was granted \$2MM from the city. The Board of Education permitted a \$1.3MM cut from the current operating budget, anticipating an additional \$2MM through the State Alliance Grant. With a growing enrollment that includes high-needs students, more resources are needed and class size will continue to increase. Some class sizes are already at 25 - 27 students. The high school offers comprehensive programs; however, without the Alliance funding, risk would fall among those programs with low enrollment. The roles of math and literacy coach may also shift to primary teaching roles, so there is no loss or gain in staff, but the elementary schools might lose math and literacy coaches. The shift in job roles with no loss in staff might appear seamless, but would be structurally damaging. Michael Ferguson, a Board of Education member and State Representative, provides updates from Hartford, like a recent proposed law that would disallow tuition charges for magnet schools. There was a question asked about Title 1 funding. Dr. Sal clarified that it is separate. Previously, only 6 Danbury schools were Title 1 schools; now with the lack of resources across all Danbury schools, they are all Title 1, except for the magnet school. Title 1 funding must be allocated according to guidelines. The budget will be closely monitored, as enrollment continues to grow. Registration numbers are already 40% more than that of last year's at this time. The district relies on the Alliance funding, about \$8.3MM, and has allowed for full-day kindergarten across all schools. Full-day kindergarten is a non-required program, but is crucial for students, parents and achievement gaps.
- ✓ Danbury was the only district in the country that had two students appointed to West Point. There are a number of students at the middle and high school levels that are doing exceptionally well academically and receiving scholarships. Danbury continues to move forward despite low resources.

## CoDA (Celebration of Danbury Arts) Debrief

- ✓ Janet was pleased that the City-Wide PTO was provided with tables inside the building, as opposed to originally having to bring tables and tent for an outside set up. There was a sufficient number of volunteers from the PTO's, as well as volunteers from the National Honor Arts Society. The booth closed about an hour before the close of the festival as supplies ran out. The goal was not to have leftover supplies. The line for the sand art activity moved at a steady pace. The kids enjoyed the craft. The City-Wide PTO took in \$75 in donations. Clean-up was easy. Rich thanked Dr. Sal for loaning a district banner. It was a good opportunity for the City-Wide PTO to be involved/visible in the community. Rich thanked everyone who helped with the booth.

## Updates from School Representatives

- ✓ Shelter Rock PTO just finished a BOGO Scholastic Book Fair; proceeds go towards providing Scholastic News for all students. The yearbook will be distributed this week. There are a few assemblies scheduled for the end of the school year, which correlate to the Start with Hello initiative, building community and good citizenship. Girl Scout Troop 5001 will unveil a new Buddy Bench for the school courtyard. There will also be a Reading Celebration, to promote summer reading and many online resources. Awards will be given across all grade levels. More technology was ordered to improve resources throughout the school.
- ✓ King Street PTO voted to approve the addition of promethean boards at the request of the kindergarten teachers. They held an Apex Fun Run in order to pay for the promethean boards in the 5 kindergarten classrooms. Dr. Sal mentioned that he received a complaint that the program was disruptive. The PTO recognized that it was held rather late in the school year and coincided with testing and the Book Fair. They also had just completed a Yankee Candle fundraiser. One PTO member stated that parents were overwhelmed at that point, it was scheduled at the last minute, however, the PTO raised over \$12k. Other feedback from some other parents was that they had already contributed to an Apex Fun Run since they also have children at Mill Ridge. The percentage of profit taken by Apex is 48%, leaving 52% towards the PTO. Apex supplies coaches, backpacks for each student, and prizes. Dr. Sal suggested that the PTO make the faculty aware of the program and schedule the run at another time of the school year. The PTO had already discussed handling the fundraiser differently, looking at other options and choosing to hold it in the fall instead of spring. It was asked how much advanced notice was needed to book. Rachel stated that spots fill quickly and it needs to be scheduled now for the fall. The AIS PTO held theirs in the fall, advertised it as the only fundraiser for the school year, and raised about \$18k. Dr. Sal suggested forwarding information to other PTO's about scheduling in the fall. The King Street PTO mentioned the open floor plan as an issue, but the Apex staff was flexible in making adjustments as needed. Overall as a new experience, the students enjoyed it. Teachers also participated in the run. Participants seek sponsors to pledge a certain amount per lap. The program comes with a positive message around leadership and physical wellness. King Street PTO President, Tim Siebert, organized the annual ice cream social at the end of the year. (He and his wife also organize the Welcome

- Back Picnic at the beginning of each year.) The event raises a few hundred dollars. Teachers help to scoop ice cream. Tim is the DJ. There are costumed characters.
- ✓ Pembroke PTO had about \$4,300 in sales at their BOGO Book Fair. The final mile in the Kids Marathon will be held this weekend at the New Fairfield HS. They just signed a contract for their fall catalog fundraiser with an option for home delivery service through Cherrydale. A mobile cart was recently purchased for the music teacher, who loses space when certain events are held at the school. The PTO has looked into requests for projectors or smart boards, which can be expensive. One teacher suggested IPEVO, a less expensive document camera, which can stand alone or be connected to a projector to act as a smart board.
  - ✓ DHS PTO held their last meeting in May, the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual "Parent to Parent," which is offered to help incoming parents of freshmen. The PTO Secretary, Stephany Fanning, presented to about 200 attendees. Rich thanks the middle school PTO's and principals for their assistance in spreading the word. The presentation was well received with much participation during Q&A's and resulted with more attendance at the regular PTO meeting that followed. The executive board will have its final meeting tomorrow to discuss the calendar for next school year, which will emulate the successful events of the past. Their focus will be communication to parents. Fundraising is typically done during Open House. As PTO President, Rich is proud to be a part of the organization. Lynne acts as PTO Vice-President and was invited to weigh in over the phone. She thanked Rich for covering the update. Janet said that graduating seniors were invited to sign the final beams before they were put in place as part of the new construction. The construction is ahead of schedule. Graduation is on schedule, but there was some concern over parking.
  - ✓ AIS PTO just held an End of Year Picnic, which the executive board put together with various information pieces provided through the City-Wide PTO. They used information from the Sodexo presentation to offer hot food, as well as other various tips from the King Street and Shelter Rock picnic events. There were about 400 attendees. A group of 5<sup>th</sup> graders wrote a paper about the best kind of drinking water. They determined that plastic bottles are not the best source and petitioned the PTO to fund and install refillable water stations. Last month, AIS went on their school-wide field trip to see "Born In China", the new Disney nature film, to coincide with Earth Day. The CT Ballet gave an assembly for the 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grades. Rachel suggested mentioning proper invoicing at the next CT Ballet presentation. The assembly is great and at a very reasonable cost of \$225. They held a Field Day, as well as participated in the elementary school-wide track meet. The last PTO meeting will be held tomorrow morning. There will be an ice cream social/art show, which is put together by the art teacher and staff. The 5<sup>th</sup> graders will have a moving up ceremony and reception on the 19<sup>th</sup>.

### Other Discussion

- ✓ Dr. Sal mentioned the tremendous challenge of students who are at risk of falling behind during the summer break, also referred to as the "summer slide." Students are losing up to 30 percentage points over the summer and require intervention to bring those students back up to grade level. The district is looking into ways to further encourage summer

reading and math. This is in addition to summer school. Not all students who are invited attend summer school. The Governor's challenge is promoted. Sharon hopes that the digital resources promoted at Shelter Rock will be effective. Chrissy mentioned Overdrive.com offered at the Danbury Library, which lends e-books. The Danbury Library also offers a summer reading program.

- ✓ Rich expressed his gratitude toward the City-Wide PTO members. He hopes that this year's momentum will continue into the next school year. The shared information and discussion makes the City-Wide PTO effective.
- ✓ Janet is helping with graduation and informed members that seniors are not allowed to go to prom or receive a cap and gown without settling all outstanding balances, such as library dues, parking fees, lunch costs, etc.
- ✓ City-Wide PTO meeting schedule, minutes and information are posted on the website: <http://danburycitywidepto.digitalpto.com>. Members can also find us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/DanburyCityWidePTO/>.

#### Next Meetings (All meetings are open to the public)

- ✓ Board of Education Meetings: June 14 & 28 at 7pm
- ✓ City-Wide PTO: September 11, 2017 at 6:30pm

#### Adjournment

- ✓ The meeting adjourned at 7:25pm.

Respectfully submitted by,

Rachel Chaleski

City-Wide PTO Secretary