

DeWitt Middle School PTA Meeting, June 10, 2013

Minutes by PTA secretary Tonya Engst

Approval of Minutes from April 29 PTA Meeting

A motion to approve the last meeting's minutes was made by Shivaun Archer. Seconded, Amelia Habicht. They are approved.

Co-president's Report, Diana Campbell

Our slate of nominees for new people joining the PTA's executive board (these positions are voted on):

- * Debbie Whitehead – co-president. Debbie is a previous PTA president at Northeast Elementary school
- * Ofer and Gilly Leshed – co-treasurers
- * Sara VanLooy – secretary

Later in the meeting, Tonya Engst motions that we vote to accept the above-listed slate of nominees, Vanessa Warner seconds the motion. A quorum is present. The slate of nominees is approved.

Diana also noted these volunteer positions (not voted on)

- * Shawna will continue as Web site coordinator.
- * Beverly Way and her husband will be participating on Site Council.
- * Directory - Shivaun will take on this project, but only if she gets a co-volunteer.
- * Newsletter - We have an editor, Jenny Barnett, but she is asking for a helper.
- * Welcome Picnic - We need a coordinator.
- * International Night - Tal Cohen will coordinate, but needs helper(s).
- * 8th grade promotion coordinator and helpers for spring 2014 needed.
- * Staff Luncheon - Several people have agreed to help out for spring 2014. We had 6 volunteers last year; of that group of six, three will no longer have a student at DeWitt next year and three can volunteer again next year.

From what we've heard, the 8th grade promotion committee is doing well this year. The graduation ceremony will be at Kulp Auditorium, at Ithaca High School. Graduation party is at DeWitt Middle School with a beach theme. Food is being requested from the overall DeWitt community for the party.

September Welcome Picnic Date

Last September, this event was well-attended and nearly all the food was gobbled up. This coming fall, the school year is starting later than usual. The proposed date for the picnic is September 17th, and that date seems good with Mr. Knight and with the Jewish holiday calendar.

Treasurer's Report, Shivaun Archer

The report is included at the end of the PDF version of these minutes.

* Shivaun noted how all the donations this year are appreciated. And, a thanks to Esther Racoosin for her efforts to sell advertising to raise funds.

* This year, to handle the bulk of any extra money left over, the PTA will donate equal sums to each of the three grades for general use among those grades.

Principal's Report, Mac Knight

Two teachers are retiring: Patricia (Patty) Clare and Bosi Rodabe [sp? not listed on staff page so I can't check].

We don't expect to have an autism program next year (DeWitt is not expecting any autistic students), so our autism teacher is transferring to the pre-k autism program.

End of school year logistical notes:

* For 6th and 7th graders, the last day of school (Thursday) is a half-day. School ends on a half-day, at 11:30am.

* For 8th-grade graduation, students will be allowed 4 tickets each and it may be possible to offer more tickets for special requests. [As it turned out, because of our new venue in Kulp, there were no tickets. — Tonya] Last day of school for 8th graders is a Wednesday. 6th and 7th graders have field trips this day, so the 8th graders will have the school to themselves as a last day to wrap up and say good-bye.

A few follow-ups and additional points:

* Next at the meeting, there was an informal, general discussion of how well Kulp worked as an auditorium for the recent choir concert, both for sound quality and large audience size. The concert was videotaped.

* Question: Boynton appears to have two art teachers (1.5 as it turns out). Wondering if DeWitt will also get that same amount of teaching staff.

* Reply: Mr. Knight is working on it and has requested it. Mr. Knight feels that DeWitt could use a few more FTEs in various special topics to even things out. Seems to be taking a while.

* Question: Can we grease the wheels?

* Answer: Yes. Talk to, for example, Luvelle Brown. Talk to Jason Trumble.

* Comment: In addressing people's concerns about if DeWitt will have a musical next year, the job position for next year has now been posted in plenty of time for having a musical director in place in time for a musical (and other productions) to be carried out.

Variety show: The recent show at DeWitt was awesome. Among many great acts was an excellent yo-yo act and a great hip-hop dancing presentation. But, maybe we don't need three shows next year. Because this year only about twenty people came to last show. But in a recent year, having only one show was too few. Here at our meeting, we appear to come to a consensus that two shows would be a good idea to try next year.

Student Activities Accounts: There is an application process that school groups go through to have a fundraiser approved. The goal is mostly to make sure that fundraising initiatives aren't all taking place at the same time. Groups that receive money, whether from fundraising or simply by having parents write checks are these:

6th grade choir

Each grade team

Aquarium club

Band

Community based (something ?)

Cultural achievement

Drama

Wayne's Garden

Honor Society

Horse Club [If I understood correctly, horse club operates on a \$0 budget]

Junior Solar Spring technology club

Library

Music

Orchestra

Phys Ed

Ski Club

Circle of Courage Council

Taxes

TSA

WEB Club

Yearbook

Drawing Club

Yearbook

Report Cards:

* Mr. Knight floated the idea of a new way to express how students are doing on report cards. Students would still receive grades as usual, but there would also be a report on other aspects of a student's relationship to the school. These aspects are: citizenship, work habits, and homework.

* Part of the motivation for including homework on this matrix would be to remove it from the grade, so that grades do not so much rely on students completing homework, but more reflect mastery.

* For each aspect, student reports would indicate, from each teacher, whether a student was always, usually, sometimes, or seldom/never doing well. The exact wording is still being settled on.

* Suggestion: Don't have absolutes, just break into Usually, Sometimes, Seldom.

* Mr. Knight showed us two visual layouts that could be used to summarize/express a student's report. It seemed at the meeting that most of the parents liked the second option better, because it is more nuanced and breaks it out the categories more.

* Mr. Knight is trying to think about a good way to present the information, but without a huge amount of paper. Possibly, for some students, it could be shared electronically instead of on paper.

* Comments: Could have e-version and paper version to save on paper. Have a team grade and not a per-subject grade. Teachers could enter the data for each kid per class and then a computer could put everything together. Will teachers like having to do this?

* Suggestion: In addition to rating the students, it would be nice if the students could give real feedback, so that teachers can get a better idea of what is working from the student's perspective.

* Note: A student template/survey is being developed.

Next PTA meeting is tentatively schedule for Monday, September 23rd (most likely) or September 30th (possible). The date needs to be coordinated with respect to the parent open house date.

DeWitt PTA Treasurers Report 04/29/13 (Shivaun Archer)

Reporting period from 09/01/12 - 04/29/13

Income

- DeWitt PTA Membership = \$471; DeWitt Donations w/ membership = \$395
- DeWitt Direct Appeal = \$1610
- Donations to International Night = \$25
- Advertising = \$542
- iGive = \$26
- T-shirt fundraiser net income = \$301
- Staff Appreciation Lunch donations = \$170

Total = \$4736

Expenses

- Office supplies, mailing = \$420.77 (3 newsletters)
- Returned newsletters = \$41.05
- NY PTA dues = \$408 (based on 102 members)
- PTA council dues = \$45
- Directory Printing = \$231.60
- Bank Charges = \$9.49
- Open house and welcome picnic = \$474.78
- Stocking student supply cabinet = \$175
- International night = \$225
- Meetings - Joint PTA meeting and ice cream social = \$62.77
- Miscellaneous = \$33.05 (= change on hand and gift for Judy Fernandes)

Total = \$3323.94

Pending expenses for the year - mailing (~\$150), Insurance (~\$250), Donation to DeWitt Activities (~TBD)

Checking account balance 04/24/14 = \$4788.95