

**BIRCH LANE PTA**  
Meeting Minutes  
Date: October 11, 2019

Kristine Magnifico, Presiding President  
Quorum/Present

- Meeting called to order: at 9:45 am with Pledge

Attendance: See attached sheet

**President's Report:** Kristine Magnifico

- Thank you to Kiri Spillane and Tara Fay for the KidStuf fundraiser
- Thank you to Caroline Hogan and the Back To School Barbecue committee (Lisa MacDonald, Nicole Clark, Andrea Leckler, Melissa Vergakis) for all of their hard work. We had amazing turnout – almost 800 people attended, it's usually closer to 500.
- Thank you to the Vicki Abbinanti and the Plant Sale committee (Andrea Ash, Stephanie Gentile, Marie Drexler) – We used a new vendor and the plants were beautiful
- Chris Zlatniski has reported for Membership – we reached our goal in September. Thanks to everyone for signing up. Anyone who hasn't can still go onto birchlanepa.net and sign up.
- A motion to vote on the minutes for the September 20<sup>th</sup> PTA meeting was proposed by Kristine Magnifico and seconded by Eileen Tumminello. The minutes were approved unanimously with a voice vote with no nays and no abstentions.

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**1<sup>st</sup> Vice President's Report:** Linda Venuto

- No report

**2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President:** Tara Fay

- No report

**Correspondence:** Heather Callahan

- No correspondence

**Recording secretary:** Eileen Tumminello

- No report

**Treasurer's report:** Amy MacLeod

- Treasury Report:
  - At last meeting on September 20, 2019, there was \$11,305.43 in the checking account
  - As of today, October 11, 2019, there's \$12,365.74 in the account
  - The statement for September 2019 was reconciled by Marianna Somers

**Board of Education Report:** – Eileen Tumminello

- Report from meeting on 9/12/2019
  - We started the year with 6800 children. We have a lot more kindergarteners than last year (as well as kids who've moved in in other grades) which is a reversal of enrollment over the past years.
  - Part of the BOE goals for this school year is to reexamine class sizes in elementary school. The current guidelines are K: 22, 1-3: 24, 4-6: 26 and were developed 10 years ago. They're going to do a review to see if these are still reasonable.

- They've been reviewing our IT security. We have been subjected to a number of attempted virus and phishing attacks. Rockville Centre was recently the victim of a ransomware attack. We've implemented additional security measures, like changing teacher email addresses and making them available only through haiku and the parent portal, not on the website like in the past.
- Report from meeting on 9/26/19
  - Dr. Fasano did a presentation on the Safety Committee
  - It grew out of Parkland and includes students from Ames, MHS, teachers, social workers, psychologists, deans and administrators. It's facilitated by Dr. Fasano and Mr. Flynn
  - There are 3 components:
    - Short Term – immediate changes
    - Long Term – ongoing or for future changes
    - Human Factor – sharing information, communicating to the right people, understanding how people are bullied and how do we share concerns
  - Beginning this year the following changes were implemented:
    - Zero tolerance for missing IDs
    - Added 3 numbers to the IDs – the 24/7 district security command center, the number for PPS to contact social works and psychologist, the LI Crisis Center
    - Implemented a new system to communicate with all students via text, voicemail and email to all kids at once. The system was being tested that week.

**PTA Council Report:** – Eileen Tumminello

- Challenge Day for 9<sup>th</sup> graders will be starting the week of Columbus Day. Kids go for one full day with counselors, teachers and facilitators. This is a social-emotional program where kids open up, learn about each other and start to realize that kids are all going through the same things.
- The Yale Ruler Program was implemented at Berner this year. This is an evidence-based approach to integrating social and emotional learning into schools. The program teaches kids the skills emotional intelligence, helping them **R**ecognize, **U**nderstand, **L**abel, **E**xpress and **R**egulate their emotions.

**PTSA Meeting:** – Eileen Tumminello

- Mr. Weber from Guidance did a presentation, which included information on the college minifairs, BOCES and LIHSA (we send more kids than any other district)
- Upcoming – Spirit Week starts Monday, the pep rally is the 18<sup>th</sup>, Homecoming is the 19<sup>th</sup>
- Dr. Fasano provided an update from the Safety Committee presentation on 9/26

**Septa Report:** Anthony Prizzi (read by Kristine Magnifico)

- The bike clinic was a huge success
- Fall fundraiser
  - pocket calendar - \$5
  - tumblers - \$23 for the 16 oz, \$28 for the 24 oz.
  - tote bags - \$5
- Upcoming events:
  - Education Roundtable – 10/14 6:30 at the McKenna Senior Center
  - Halloween Dance – 10/18 6-8:30 at the Ames Café
- Visit the Septa website at [www.massapequasepta.com](http://www.massapequasepta.com), sign up for the Septa Remind and like and follow on Facebook.

**Picture Day:** Kathleen Mecabe

- Picture Days are 10/15 and 10/16
- Forms were sent home
- Please don't wear green

**Reflections:** Linda Venuto

- The theme is Look Within
- Forms and flyers with the details and dates were sent home and are online
- Drop off dates are Tuesday 11/12 and Thursday 11/14.
- Submissions need to be dropped off, they cannot be given to the teachers.

**Spirit Wear:** Stephanie Iannuzzi

- Forms were sent home and there are links online and on Facebook
- Question – Can we order different styles from other schools. Answer: we can ask, but it would be supporting other PTAs
- You can go to New Wave Sports for sizing
- We're looking to see if there is a way to get credit for Birch Lane for in-store purchases

**Boosterthon Fun Run:** Kristine Magnifico

The program starts the week of October 21<sup>st</sup> and the Fun Run is October 28<sup>th</sup>

**Teacher Reports:** Mrs Sonzone and Miss Downey

- K – Learning their numbers to 5 in Math and are starting their Writers Workshop
- 1<sup>st</sup> – Learning their numbers to 10, starting their Writers Workshop and learning how to select books; in Social Studies they're learning rules & responsibilities and citizenship and learning about bucket filling.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> – In Science they're learning about matter, in their Readers Workshop they're reading a fiction book and working on their personal narratives
- 3<sup>rd</sup> – They're learning the elements of fiction, in Science they're learning about forces and motion; in Social Studies they're beginning to learn about maps, in Math they're finishing addition and subtraction and getting ready to move on to multiplication.
- 4<sup>th</sup> – They're working on place value and rounding and using manipulatives in addition and subtraction, in Reading and Writing they're learning the elements of fiction and the steps in the writing process, they're learning about world geography in Social Studies and studying energy in Science. They 4<sup>th</sup> grade teachers would like to thank the PTA for the generous staff lunch.
- 5<sup>th</sup> – In Reading they're working in fiction and have begun a unit on writing memoirs, they're enjoying the approach in the new Math curriculum, they're learning the geography of the Western Hemisphere in Social Studies, studying matter in Science and participating in hands-on experiments in Enrichment.

**Reports from Administration:** Mr. Aspetti and Mrs. Larkin

- Thank you to the Back To School Barbecue committee, there was great participation. Thank you to the Plant Sale, Spiritwear and KidStuf committees.
- Red Ribbon week is coming up
  - The focus is on making healthier choices
  - There will be a different theme each day
  - A form will be sent home and it will be posted on the website
- Thank you to Miss Downey, Mrs. Sonzone and Mrs. Strauss who are the new teacher reps.

- Fire Prevention Awareness is coming up for grades K-3. There will be assemblies and the poster contest. There will be a building winner and then a district winner, who will get a ride to school in a firetruck
- Boosterthon reps have been in to talk to the staff. Everyday there will be a pep talk for the kids. We're hoping for good weather and the building goal is \$20,000
- Halloween – a notice went home with information on costumes, the parade details etc. We (Mr. Aspetti and Mrs. Larkin) are asking for patience for any parties starting right after the parade, please have your IDs out.
- Summer Rec – the Birch work was supposed to be done during the school year. There is no space to do that, so it has to be shifted to summer. They're trying to bang out as much as they can so that summer rec can be up and running for the following summer.

## Q&A

Q: Why don't we do a school play like some other schools?

A: Mr. Aspetti - Those are clubs. We can have up to 8 and are based on the advisors who can run them and have ideas for them. We have all different clubs like the mural club and kindness club. At least five had to be divided because so many kids were interested. They can only be run by staff, not parents and the discussions start in June.

Q: 1<sup>st</sup> grade parents are extremely concerned, currently one class has 25 students. This is not good for students and isn't a good value for our taxes.

A: Mr. Aspetti - We are 100% advocating for your children. I've has read the letter sent to Mrs. Iconis. It was well-written, respectful and the right approach. I was really proud of it. No one would disagree that smaller class size is better. The Board is absolutely looking at it, not just for Birch but for the community. Good for you for handling it the right way; it's bringing awareness and work from the Board.

Q: Where will the funds from Boosterthon go?

A: Kristine Magnifico - Our budget we presented included projected income from Boosterthon and spending double on Arts in Education. We're looking into a particularly expensive circus program and have scaled back the fall fundraiser. We're looking to do a mom's night out and are looking for a venue. It would be a free night out to eat and drink if you want to. There's no pressure to spend \$50 on top of everything else. We'll see how Boosterthon goes and maybe pull in another program.

Q: Do we still do StarLab?

A: Mr. Aspetti – No. The district doesn't have that program anymore.

Q: Have we given any thought to a mindfulness program or yoga?

A: Mr. Aspetti – A number of teachers do practice that in class. We will be doing mindfulness training and implementing it inside the classrooms.

Q: Can we sell the chocolate bars?

A: Kristine Magnifico – We can look into that, we would need to form a committee.

Q: How do the 5<sup>th</sup> grade committees get chosen?

A: Mr. Aspetti – A letter goes out to see who is interested. Once the slips are back, we decide on committee co-chairs and invite all other parents and pick out of a hat for subcommittees etc. That letter comes home around April.

Q: What is in the rooms upstairs?

A: Mr. Aspetti – All literacy coaches district wide are here, we have the science lab, the guided reading library for teachers, two self-contained classes, the OT office, the office for the psychologists and two YMCA rooms. There were concerns regarding the after-school program and we had to bus some kids. When the move happened, we made more space for the Y, every school got a lab room and self-contained classrooms take up 3 in the school.

Q: Is there room for another 2<sup>nd</sup> grade classroom?

A: Mr. Aspetti – We'd make it work. Some of those things we have are luxuries. It's nicer to have the library in a classroom instead of a closet, there's a nicer space for support etc. We would have to take something away.

Q: Have we given any thought to Universal Pre-K?

A: The conversation has to be had, probably down the road. It depends on a number of factors like money, space etc.

Q: Do we have any idea on Kindergarten enrollment next year?

A: Mr. Aspetti – We won't know until they register. We're doing it a little earlier this year. For this year we knew early on it would be big.

Q: Do we still do a 100<sup>th</sup> Day celebration and invite parents?

A: Mr. Aspetti – We thought it was a nice day last year and are anticipating doing it again.

Q: Last year in Kindergarten my daughter had Mrs. Duncan. Is there a specialist pushing in to 1<sup>st</sup> grade?

A: Mr. Aspetti – No. It's done as needed, but once they leave Kindergarten, supports are pull-outs. IEPS might require a push-in, but otherwise push-ins are Kindergarten only. It's a luxury to do this.

Q: Do we still have Makerspace?

A: Mr. Aspetti – It's now done during Library, 20% of their time focuses on that. It used to be a lunch club, now it's for all grades.

**Upcoming Events:**

10/1 – 10/16 Spiritwear Sale

10/14 – School closed for Columbus Day

10/15 – 10/16 – Picture Day

10/24 – BOE Meeting, 8 pm at MHS

10/27 – Safe Halloween at MHS, 1-4 pm

10/31 – Halloween Parade and class parties

11/5 – School closed for Election Day

11/11 – School closed for Veteran's Day

11/12 – PTA General Meeting – 6:45 pm GP room

11/12 & 11/14 – Reflections Submissions

11/28 & 11/29 – Thanksgiving Recess

Meeting Ended at 10:48 am