

## Larson Middle School PTO Zoom Meeting Minutes March 17, 2021, 7:00 p.m.

**In Attendance:** Joe Duda, Anne Sackrison, Janet Matichuk, Kate Fellin, Tari McGrane, Bindu Sundaram, Matt Sackrison, Mark Hayes, Michelle Tedder, Christine DePilato (asst to Dr. Machesky), Erica Radack, Deepak Gehlaut, Chris Fritzching, Dawn Leonard  
Call to Order: 7:03 p.m.

Motion to approve with changes PTO Minutes from January 20, 2021, meeting by: Matt Sackrison, Second: Mark Hayes (Minutes Approved)

### REPORT OF OFFICERS

#### **Treasurer's Report:** Tari McGrane

- Balance as of March 1<sup>st</sup> is \$15,656.84
- Restaurant night's income was \$538
- Kroger Rewards is \$548
- Teacher conferences budget is \$750  
(paused for District update)

#### **Christine DiPalico, Asst. to Dr. Machesky, District update/Year in Review**

- Last 12 months have been most difficult and we are moving forward together.
- Challenges > returning to learn, enrollment down by approximately 300 students (mostly at kindergarten & elementary level), and the State wasn't clear on the budget with all the State and Federal money it was being provided.
- TSD is stable, and the schedule flexibility for students we were given permitted professional learning for staff.
- Equity & Inclusion > Pandemic is challenging for some of the students. Challenges include how do we make sure students feel safe with the unrest.
- TSD has had some of the highest attendance in weeks...approximately 99% across the district. - No contact spread with our children with Covid positive cases since October. When there was, it's between teachers. Cases coming in and going out now are not experiencing spreading to those in close proximity. - What to expect moving forward: some will want to stay virtual. In the next few weeks when more information is provided, parents will be able to choose to return in seat or remain virtual for the remainder of this school year.
- There will be a limited number of summer school offerings, most will be for grade recovery. It will be a challenge figuring out the level of interest for summer. Teachers for this summer will surge for K-8 enrichment.
- In regards to the calendar for next school year, though contract negotiations are not complete yet (anticipating resolution soon), for planning purposes it will be similar to this year (i.e. starting before Labor Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays, and the mid-winter and spring breaks.
- Though the Athens Varsity basketball has been quarantined, the District is hoping all of the spring sports will be returned by June, including the summer camps.
- (Joe Duda): Hoping to run track this spring...it will be a limited schedule if they do. - Additional State funding will be available for districts that have a minimum 20 hours a week of in-person instruction. The elementary and middle schools meet this (time is bell to bell, not classroom time). The high schools are a little short and will likely have times adjusted (i.e. longer passing time). Meeting the minimum 20 hours would yield TSD an additional \$5 million.
- Starting April 12<sup>th</sup> will be the next return to in-seat for the remainder of the year. The middle and high schools will maintain the 4 days a week (attend M-T-Th-F) and remain virtual on Wednesday. Though it's the same students attending (vs. in the fall when the alphabet was split for M-T and Th-F), the schools plan to use

this day for extra cleaning and provide both teachers and students with a mid-week, mask-free day. It also allows the teachers to focus on virtual only (vs. both virtual and in-seat students at the same time). State testing will also commence the week of April 12.

\*\*\*end of district update\*\*\*

#### Treasurer's Report: Tari McGrane (continued)

- There's \$1,200 allocated for teacher appreciation.
- Mini-grants: A motion was made to approve an additional \$1,519 that has been requested. Items include: iPad charging station for kids, TV, novels, games, stationery & stamps, outdoor equipment (especially to use during outdoor mask breaks), light covers, microphones for students (\$400) to be able to do multi-media presentations (microphone picks up a better range). Joe Duda made a motion to approve, Michelle Tedder seconded, all in favor, motion passed.
- Teachers will be asked to provide photos and examples of what was given back to the staff/students. We want to be sure to publicize this on our website and PTO page!
- After this latest grant approvals, there is approximately \$1000 remaining.

#### Teacher Representative: Mark Hayes

We've only been back a couple of weeks face to face and energy is tremendous. It's fun to be back and feeling the energy. Most of the teachers (approx 90%) have both vaccine doses. Hopefully contract will be taken care of soon...moving in the right direction. The teachers really appreciate all the support from the parents and the PTO.

#### Principal's Message:

Lots of emails this week for Covid positive cases. As great as it is having in seat, we still have to keep track of safety, still managing and contact tracing. There's a little uptick at Larson and the area. Overall we are doing really well. The procedures intend to keep people safe. No close contacts have also contracted and having the week after spring break virtual should also help minimize any spread.

Kids have been following the rules and wearing masks. Kids are getting mask breaks and trying to make it feel normal. Teachers are familiar with addressing back and forth with the in-seat. Hybrid is not ideal and what school is about. Kids need to be in class socializing and all the other great things that happen in a school. A high percentage of staff are fully or almost fully vaccinated.

Selection for returning in seat for 4<sup>th</sup> marking period started and is open through Tuesday. It already appears as we will have more kids back, which will pose a challenge with spacing and current procedures in classrooms and cafeteria. Larson already has higher percentage of kids back in seat than the other middle and high schools. We have had to move classes to different locations and future changes for kids trying to come back to make in seat numbers accessible.

For a lot of families, kids haven't been in a physical school for a year. We will not be able to do hybrid next school year. You will either be in seat, or a virtual class separate from current classroom teachers.

We are normally in the process of course selections for next school year, but it will not be rolling in April. They are trying to figure out who/number of kids that will return in seat in September and what course options can be supported. The process of selection will be through Power Schools.

Standardized testing will be the week of April 12<sup>th</sup>. They are making plans because these have been done in person, not from home. They will be figuring out a way for the virtual students to test in the building. TSD has requested the substitution of district benchmarks (vs. state standardized testing) be used this year and are

waiting to hear back from the State for permission to deviate. If they do not approve, then we will have to do the MStep, etc. The collecting of the date is a means to adjust instructions and if the data isn't reliable, it doesn't do TSD any good.

We are also figuring out special ways to celebrate 8<sup>th</sup> graders virtual promotion ceremony, parade, etc.

8<sup>th</sup> Grade Celebration: Kate Fellin

There will be a zoom meeting on April 7<sup>th</sup> to plan. Last year there was money left over and the students received goodie bags. Currently OK for budget and expects our income will likely be \$1200-1300 higher due to fund raising. Last year it was approximately \$2800. Many local businesses made donations that were included in the goodie bags. Joe Duda will put the meeting information in a newsletter and send to all the current 8<sup>th</sup> grade parents.

PTO President's Report: Anne Sackrison

There will be one more PTO meeting this year and there will be elections at that meeting. Notices will be sent inviting incoming 6<sup>th</sup> grade parents from the feeder schools.

Co-Vice-President's Report: Kate Fellin & Bindu Sundaram

- Nothing to new to add.

Benefit Mobile Fundraising App: Matt Sackrison

- Keep using the Benefit App!

Box Tops: Anne Sackrison

- \$30 should be arriving in April.

Restaurant Nights: Dawn Leonard

- Restaurant nights was going well, but the last one not so much! Have to find a new contact for BWW. April will be Olga's. Approximately \$75 was earned at Escape (formerly Troy Lanes)

Special Services Parent Advisory Council

- Nothing to report

Spirit Wear: Shannon Burt

- Nothing to report

Staff Appreciation: Dawn Leonard

Approximately 80 staff members. There will be a signup after spring break for staff lounge requests. Looking at box lunches from Honey Baked Ham (they have vegetarian, can send staff a Google doc, and will write staff name on the box, and everyone gets what they want). There will be bagels and coffee in the staff lounge, Chalk the Walk, construction hearts for kids to write messages for teachers, etc. She is also contacting local businesses for coupons (delis, car washes, etc.).

Old Business

None

New Business

None

Open Discussion/Questions

- Athens PTO needs a new treasurer.
- Matt Sackrison advised that AHS might be starting its own robotics team FRC and looking at Vex, starting a non-profit to help is what's on the horizon. Larson has an FRC team of its own.
- The Career Development program is where they do interviews with the 8<sup>th</sup> graders, even in a virtual setting from classrooms, and teachers are trying to keep it alive. Joe Duda to see if it can be done. A lot of stuff happens in class to get kids ready for the interview process where they articulate to adults what they know and want to accomplish in the future.
- The deadline for the 8<sup>th</sup> grade Washington DC trip in June is flexible and the company Larson is working with is really good, taking reservations right up to the trip as space is available.

Motion to adjourn: Dawn Leonard

Seconded by: Matt Sackrison

Meeting adjourned 8:31 p.m.

Approved at 5/19/21 PTO Meeting