



General Meeting Minutes for the 2008 - 2009 Academic School Year
November 18, 2008 @ 7:30 p.m.
Wilkins School Conference Room (Room 17)

PTA *Board Members* in attendance:

Co-Presidents: Christine Poisson
Krista Hanks
Vice President: Gillian Smith
Secretary: Jil Romano

PTA *Board Members* absent: Michele Donoghue

PTA Total *Members* in attendance: 15

The meeting was called to order at 7:33 p.m.

President's Report

- Pledge of Allegiance.
- Introduction of everyone in attendance.
- Introduced special guest speaker, Nancy Head with School Board to discuss renovations at the Amherst Schools.

Nancy Head

As part of an ongoing series of special guest presentations at Amherst PTA General Meetings, Nancy Head from the Amherst School Board spoke about the progress of and plans for the district wide school renovations. She provided a detailed slide show presentation about the renovations of our schools that were completed over the summer of 2008, including highlights of renovation plans scheduled for 2009.

Nancy also outlined that the warrant article passed by resident voters in early 2008 is a total of \$5 million dollars spread over five years and is comprised of three phases. The entire renovation plan is eligible for 30% aid from the State of New Hampshire which reduces the total cost to the Town.

Pre-construction work began in April and continued through June 2008. This involved consultation with School personnel, architectural design, engineering studies for: mechanical, structural, electrical; and sprinkler system planning. It also included soil and concrete testing.

The renovation team grouped jobs together for cost efficiency and determined what jobs required the most lead time; all of which was based on minimizing educational disruption. Because the mechanical renovations require the most work that phase of construction is scheduled for 2009.

At Wilkins School, the renovations completed for 2008 included replacing all windows and many ceiling and floor tiles. Lighting, HVAC, and electrical systems were upgraded to meet code requirements and to improve energy efficiency. Kitchen space was reconfigured and storage areas were created. At Clark School, a sprinkler system was installed along with new doors and windows. AMS received, among other behind the scenes improvements, new storage areas. The administration office was reconfigured resulting in a significant improvement to the Nurse's office space.

The renovations completed for 2008 was a smooth operation and allowed our schools to start on time in August. The specifications for 2009 work are anticipated in January. Highlights of the planned work for next summer include the reconfiguration of the administrative and nursing offices at both Clark and Wilkins Schools.

The Amherst PTA wishes to thank Nancy Head for attending our meeting and sharing both her enthusiasm and this valuable information.

Secretary's Report

The committee chairs received copies of the October 2008--2009 minutes via Email a week prior to the November General Meeting. Copies were also available at the November General Meeting. The October minutes were reviewed. Jil Romano requested a motion to receive the minutes. Gillian Smith moved to accept the minutes. Cheryl Forster seconded the motion. The October 2008-2009 minutes were accepted.

The **Magazine Drive** chair people are looking for "shadows" to chair this committee for the 2009-2010 school year. This committee event has historically been the biggest PTA fundraiser, which makes most of the PTA sponsored programs and events possible. Students collect orders from families, friends, and relatives. The committee is responsible for the accounting, processing, and filing of magazine orders for students and teachers. By mid-September, preparations are being made for the drive but most of the work is done the first two weeks of October. The Magazine Drive itself lasts two weeks. If you are interested in this opportunity please contact Jil Romano at 673-7980 or ptaboard.org@amherstpta.org for a complete job description.

Treasurer's Report

Funds came in from the magazine drive and membership for the student directory. Paid out funds for attendance to the PTA state convention. Bulk of funds went to Curriculum Enrichment programs and for Reflections.

Copies of the Treasurer's report for October were available at the November general meeting. Christine Poisson on behalf of Michele Donoghue read the report. Krista Hanks requested a motion to accept the budget and Ellen Roos-Unger second the motion.

Principal's Report

Gerry St. Amand -- Clark & Wilkins Schools

All students enjoyed a "Shining Star" assembly on Friday, November 14, 2008, which included clever presentations by staff members, students, and bus drivers.

In a continuing effort to connect our school communities, selected classes and staff members from both schools attended the "Shining Star" assemblies at their "sister" school, which proved beneficial for all involved.

Friday, November 21, 2008, will be an early release day and lunch will be served. Dismissal will begin at Clark at 11:45 A.M. Wilkins will dismiss at 11:50 A.M.

Parent Conferences will continue throughout the month of November and can be scheduled with teachers via phone or email.

November professional development activities continued to focus on collection, analysis, and interpretation of data regarding the wide range of assessments we administer, such as DIBELS, NECAP, and NWEA.

Thanks to the generosity of the PTA, both playgrounds now boast additional ground cover, which will enhance safety and minimize injuries.

During our "Early Release Day", several staff members will be receiving CPR training from Deanna Cordts and Nancy Panasiti, our school nurses.

In an effort to support our students, our schools, and the greater community, we hope to begin a school-wide fundraiser titled "The Power of a Penny," which was introduced to administrators by Cherina Cohen, our volunteer coordinator. The program proposal will be shared with staff members and our school families in December.

Porter Dodge -- Amherst Middle School

- The 6th grade environmental school retreat ran smoothly up at Camp Cody.
- Nancy Head deserves credit for the renovations and for constantly keeping the voice of the school district.
- Currently running through the budget process and the first phase begins with working with the Ways and Means members.

There has been some unclear communication about the music program at AMS that was started by a SHS student. The student began a petition "not to cut the band at AMS." Band and chorus (381 kids in band and chorus 138 in theatre arts) run along side of the integrated arts program. The concern has merit and the school is currently working out the best schedule to meet needs for both studies.

School Board

Peg Bennett -- SAU#39 PTA Representative

Draft one of the Amherst School District budget for the 2009/2010 school year was presented to the Board on November 6th. Subcommittees were formed with ASB (Amherst School Board) and the Ways and Means members to meet with each department head and look at the budget line items in detail. Subcommittee meetings are underway and the budget may be revised to reflect the outcome of the subcommittee meetings.

Porter Dodge, AMS principal presented that New England League of Middle Schools evaluation report to the Board earlier this month. The three-day evaluation took place in February and they received some excellent feedback on the middle school. The report highlighted specific strengths of our school (teaching strategies, curriculum, assessment, safe environments, etc) and made some recommendations, as well (more professional development around differentiated instruction, implementation of a process to better enhance the communication process between administration, faculty, staff, and more integration of technology into the curriculum.

The Wilkins School library is automated! Automation of the library was completed last week.

The Alternative Daily Start Committee will be reviewing the parent, teacher, and student survey results during the first week of December. The committee was charged with studying the advantages and disadvantages of moving the start time of Souhegan and AMS to a later time. Thanks to all who completed the survey. Your input is extremely important and valued.

Committee Reports

Curriculum Enrichment at Clark. On November 12th Beaver Brook came in and did their presentation to the first graders on Native Americans. According to Michele Donoghue's son it was great!

The committee chairs currently have the following performers scheduled:

- January 27th Steve Blunt will come and perform for K and 1st grade
- February 3rd Tanglewood Marionettes will perform for K and 1st grade
- March 3rd Wildlife Encounters will perform for kindergartners only
- May 28th Mr. & Mrs. Fish will perform for K and 1st grade

They are still trying to nail down a date with Steve "The Science Guy" but it will hopefully be either April 21st, 22nd, or 23rd.

Curriculum Enrichment at Wilkins. The majority of the programs are happening in 2009. Dan Grady performed his marionette show for Grade 3 students (two sessions) in October and Jim Parks from Wingmasters was here earlier in October to do his Birds of Prey presentation to Grade 2 classes. They still need to finalize a date for the Rocks and Minerals presentations for Grade 2 by Barbara Medlyn, but all other programs have been booked for the year -- Techsploration (Simple Machines and Weather Workshops) for Grades 3 and 4, Bay Colony Educators for Grade 3, "Farm to Factory" presentations by the Lowell Industrial Park.

Thanks to Kathie McIntyre's help, we have booked Jeannie Brett, author and illustrator, for a two-day visit in early February. She will be working in a workshop format with 4th grade classes on the book illustration process. Last year she was here for one day but this year she will return for a two-day visit and work with each 4th grade class individually. It is a wonderful hands on activity for the students.

Reflections is in full swing. The due date for all entries is December 3rd. Workshop was a success. Judging is being held December 16th and December 17th. Ceremony of January 8th. Julia Rafuse's theme entry "Someday" is under consideration for the 2011 Reflection's theme. Reflections luncheon held during the PTA convention recognized state winners and their families.

Book Fair is in full swing. All teachers have previewed the books to make a wish list for parents to purchase for teachers so that they can add books to their classroom libraries. The book fair will be held in the Wilkins School library.

Holiday Story Time. Everything is on track!

Membership. Directories can still be purchased. The chairs are considering adding an addendum for those members that joined after the directory was published.

Family Science Day was November 8th. It was very successful! 130 children attended both sessions. Chair is sending an Email of pictures to publish in The Citizen newspaper.

Staff Appreciation. Cherina will be working on an event for the staff at Clark & Wilkins for beginning/mid December. She is hoping to do a combo soup and sweets. She will keep her committee posted!!! Another BIG THANKS to all who helped back in September with our kick-off breakfast and treats day. I know it was a warm welcome for the staff at both schools.

Hospitality. Cherina received an email from Amber Swenson in regards to the Holiday Story Time and needs to touch base with her to find out the specifics of what will be needed. She will contact the committee with needs once she confirms with Amber.

Cherina received an email from Shelly Kayser and Wendy Conway in regards to Reflections, and will be contacting people after the first of December in regards to that event.

Chili Cook Off. Cherina has a meeting scheduled for later this week with last years chair to discuss details. Cherina has already confirmed a face painter for the event, and will work on more specifics after meeting with Cheryl.

Playbill. More to report in January.

New Business

The schools will be taking part in the **Power of the Penny Program** this year. This is a statewide awareness campaign presented by NH Partners in Education and the NH State Treasurer. The goal is to challenge teachers, parents & volunteers to develop creative ways to teach children the important lesson of saving money while raising funds to help their school reach a specific goal. The hope is to start collecting pennies in January. Gerry St. Amand will be presenting this to the teachers at the next staff meeting. Any questions can be directed to Cherina.

Adjournment

Krista Hanks made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ellen Roos-Unger seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 9:08 p.m.

Submitted by:

Jil Romano

Secretary

Next Meeting: January 13, 2009 @ 7:30 p.m. Wilkins Library

Contact Information

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Bellringer Newsletter ~ ellenbr68@alumni.umass.edu