

Farmington River Elementary



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Thursday January 14, 2016

Meeting Start: 3:18 pm

Motion made to approve minutes from December's meeting was approved.
It was suggested to add School Committee meeting dates to the PTA Minutes Calendar.

In attendance: Wendy Berman, President; Craig Drenga, Vice President; Kathy Adams, Secretary; Ilona Packie, Treasurer; Chris Keller, Faculty; Mary Turo, Faculty; Ashley Nelson, Stephanie Meyers, Aimée MacGovern, Kenly Brozman, Alison Carson, Sherry DeCelle and Dana Pustinger, Parents / Committee Heads.

FOR OUR CALENDARS: Events

- W Jan 13** Ski program began; runs total of 6 weeks, ending Feb 17 (one week delay due to no snow)
- F Jan 22** 3rd Annual Chili Cook-Off with live music, featuring David Reed and The Trio Traumatica at the Knox
- M Jan 25** FRRSD and SBRSD Joint Planning Committee meeting (open to public); 6:30 pm, FRRSD Library
- M Feb 29 – F Mar 4** Scholastic Book Fair (to coincide with Read Across America day, Mar 2)
- W Mar 2** Read Across America day, celebration of Dr. Suess's birthday
- M May 2 – F May 6** Staff Appreciation Week
- M May 16 – F May 20** Screen Free Week
- F June 3 (Rain Date: Thursday, June 2nd)** Field Day

FOR OUR CALENDARS: PTA Meetings, 3:15 pm in the School Library

- Th Feb 11** February PTA Meeting
- Th Mar 10** March PTA Meeting
- Th Apr 14** April PTA Meeting
- Th May 12** May PTA Meeting

PRESIDENT'S REPORT: Wendy

Scholastic Book Fair

Scheduled for week of Read Across America, Feb 29 - March 4. Will work out event details as we get closer. Family Fun Night will be that Friday night, with pizza for families plus a book fair held that same night. Aiming for something akin to "Bubble Man" or such fun. Suggestions include hoolah hoop lady. Need to book something fairly soon. Keep tschokes boxed up, if Scholastic sends. Need remind them to send "older" kid chapter books.

Mahaiwe Opportunity

Tom ran it by teachers to gauge interest: K and Grade 3 had expressed interest. May not provide as a PTA event, due to not a lot of interest shown; classes may do individually, if they wish.

Sunshine Fund Updates

Bethany Mielke received a spa gift certificate for her extraordinary and selfless service in providing surrogacy. A donation to New Marlborough Library was made in memory of Mrs. Bertoli.

VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT: Craig Drenga, with Stephanie McNair

Drama Program Update

Stephanie McNair expressed interest in our school having the Drama Program re-instituted. Ilona had queried FRRSD teachers as to interest in after-school programs. A teacher from out of district has stepped forward with interest. However, FRRSD policy states we cannot hire from out of district. It was requested if a parent may step in, in place of a teacher, if none are available? It was further suggested to bring this subject up to the School Committee, in the absence of the Principal and Superintendent at the PTA meeting. Concern was voiced if such after-school enrichment programs are not available, whether parents shall have interest in remaining within district? It was suggested to reach out to Superintendent with question of missing programs. Question of whether Mrs. Chirachella will be available next year? Suggestion for a week-long drama after-school camp. Trying to get more for the kids to be well-rounded; drama described as an important skill to help teach kids to learn to get up on stage and speak. Suggested to appeal for a non-district teacher from outside; it was pointed out that there are plenty of theatre resources in the Berkshires, especially during the school year which is a typically more quiet season for the local performing arts. Wendy will reach out to Mrs. C and Tom to get an understanding and see what we can do to promote and restore our after-school drama program. It was mentioned we did just hire someone to take children out into the woods, representing a teacher from out of the district; to hire someone to stay in the gym and be more visible should at least be available.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Ilona

State of the Treasury

\$439 for Box Tops check received. Registrations deposited for Ski Program; invoice not yet received from Otis Ridge. Cash Calendar donations in. PTA accounting is \$17,974; \$11,665 in classroom accounts.

SECRETARY'S REPORT: Kathy A.

Holiday Shop report in the Old Business section, later on in the meeting. Formal PTA nomination process coming soon; considering official terms limits (3 years), these are last few months as PTA Secretary, after 4 years' service. Happy to answer questions and assist transition for anyone considering assuming nomination of this role.

OLD BUSINESS

Cash Calendar: Sherry

\$3,600 in donations. One outstanding check. Thanks to all who have contributed to the success of gathering donations. Printed 1,400 Cash Calendars; Kwikprint charged \$290 (Pittsfield printer was \$700). A request for more calendars was put out to people to collect more ticket buyers; response encouraging. Not all calendars get sold typically, but a good \$1,100-\$1,200 do. Should not be thrown out. Can print more; does increase cost some, as well as dilute chance of winning. Question: should we print more or cap it? Big picture is to donate to the school. Sherry will determine what another 100-200 tickets will cost. Agreed to try printing a couple of hundred more. Odds of winning decent, considering winning tickets can be entered to win again, each day of the month.

Ski Program: Sherry

42 kids signed up. \$900 for PTA participation in supplementing cost for 35 kids at \$25 per child. Last-minute enrollees, but first night went very smoothly, and with snow. 6-week program, five weeks of lesson: last week is open ski. Last week, pizza party. Teachers can also be sponsored; PTA will pay for lift ticket for the night.

Holiday Shop Wrap-Up: Kathy

Thanks to all helped make the Holiday Shop a success this season: Kathy Couch, Bridget Krans, Aimee Magovern, Jenn LaBarre, Ashley Niven, Stacey Schultze, Sherry DeCelle and Craig Drenge all assisted. Special thanks to Kelly Couch and James Adams, who helped Kathy C. and I break down shop. Seven neatly stacked boxes are labeled in storage, thanks to Kelly, who also provided updated inventory sheets. Inventory has been posted to new 2016 online inventory Kathy Couch thankfully generated.

Profit overview. Shop raised \$621.56, after having only expected to break even. One solid reason for profit: we didn't buy a whole lot. Final two classes ate up a good deal of existing inventory, representing pure profit. Old inventory now very reduced. Cycled down to a point we need to invest in beefing inventory up again for next season. A few steeply discounted items have been purchased in anticipation of next season's shop, taking advantage of end-of-season clearance items. Idea is to buy cheap, then sell at usual price. Wish to underscore

that despite it being nice to make profit this past season, it's not the intention of the Holiday Shop to be a fundraiser, but rather to provide a great time for kids, along with a lesson in budgeting and planning.

Expenditure. Outlay very minimal at \$1,240.65, relative to 4-year average of \$1,640; however, sales nearly typical at \$1,862.21 (pretty much in line with sales average of \$1,750).

Inventory accounting. Online inventory was begun to help track assets, so anybody helping buy items can avoid duplication. Initial attempt to outline big picture with specific accounting to help keep a handle on expenditures; not most accurate method to track individual sales (makes current application too broad). With buying, returning and trading in, aggravated by cryptic store registers, it became difficult to track items online up-to-the-minute. Going forward, a ballpark accounting is best we can project via online inventory.

Kids bought up all new inventory plus most of old. Grew depleted in variety too soon. A few older kids were heard to mention they wished their class had come earlier. Balance tipped too far on "spare" side. Forgotten box of knit caps discovered at break down of shop. Tried to keep budget from exceeding recommended amount of \$1,200; next season, will purchase larger amounts and hold back more between classes.

Conclusion. Although cautious idea to hold tighter than usual with budget, pendulum needs to swing back a bit toward middle. Considering range of expenditures \$1,360–\$2,100 over four years and typical sales average of \$1,750, we could comfortably increase budget somewhat. Can always return items that sell poorly. Keep in mind unless we land great donations / pre-season sales, can't expect to repeat profit next season.

Motion made to increase Holiday Shop budget to \$1,500; approved.

Goods pricing. Earlier suggestion to consider raising sale price from typically \$3-\$5 to \$4-\$7, rationale being it is hard to procure and sell quality items under \$5. True, but not sure how upping prices would go over with parents. Mixed feelings, seeking input? Consensus agreed to maintain \$3-\$5 price.

Popular/unpopular items. Pet goods most popular; minimally 70 items were sold. Other popular items included candles, back scratchers, fuzzy socks, caps and hats, travel coffee mugs and mints, head lamps, screw drivers and Dad tools, wooden 3D puzzles, and light-up marquee decorations. Seeking suggestions for other items we could stock next season and recommends for current items we might reconsider or discontinue? Axe Kleenex, Post-It notes; bring back more stuff Moms need—(bamboo) cutting boards mentioned. Suggestion to double up on popular items, then hold back on them, so all visiting classes get a fair shake.

Further suggestions. Add to next season's kids' Shopping List suggestion that kids bring their own reusable shopping totes. Plan to keep some on hand, just in case. Suggestion to reverse order of visiting, so last classes could go first next season; however, might not be possible with teacher Specials and scheduling. Problem should be addressed by increasing inventory, holding back popular items and doling out carefully.

Shop hours. Earlier suggestion of keeping shop hours over two days vs. suggestion of switching to one day. Preference for two days, more flexibility for teachers, less exhaustion, ability to buy more after first day, if running low on supplies.

Addendum to Holiday Shop report (1/19/16)

Request added for anyone who may assist in gathering supplies or items for next season's shop to please send original, itemized receipts to either myself or Wendy, and submit copies to the Treasurer for reimbursement. Method affords simple return of extra or spare items, in case it becomes indicated, in the interest of promoting profit and cash-flow.

Chili Cook-Off Update: Chris Keller

Friday, 5-8 pm. Ilona has been a great help. Trying to hit post offices, diner in town, Otis poultry farm, businesses in nearby towns. Ilona sending out toward Sandisfield and New Boston. One business would like to cook: Hinsdale Trading in Becket. Chris's son is a culinary student; he will be a chili cook. Email and paper reminders

sent next week to remind people. Meeting with Dave LaCasse next week about tables, setup and finalizing kids' menu for veggies and mac n' cheese. Kathy Couch to bring paper products (napkins, bowls, spoons and roll of table cloth paper).

Suggestion to have Dave list the event on their outside board of The Knox restaurant.

Music is all set: David Reed and The Trio Traumatica. Band wants to play 1.5 hour set; event held 5-8 pm. Suggest band to play 6-7:30, to allow time for initial tasting to begin, and votes to come, finally announcing winners at 8 pm? Agreed as a solid plan.

Chris needs help on day of event. Chris will arrive 3-3:30 pm. Kathy can help and arrive 3:30-4. Kenly can help, arrive at 4:30. Wendy will help, TBA when she can arrive. Power strips and power cords needed! Only four people so far committed to make chili: Chris's son; Hinsdale Trading; Kathy A.; Patty Strauch. Need more chili cooks!

NEW BUSINESS

1700s Colonial Soldier Reenactment: Chris Keller

Friday, May 20-22. Open to public on Saturday and Sunday. Sleepover in tents on Friday night. Trying to get a potter, other craftspeople to demonstrate. Need porta-potty, a larger handicap accessible size. Requested \$400 from each cultural council to pay for reenactment groups; still need help with funds for purchasing food.

Ye Old Lebanon Militia is one of the larger units of the Northeast who do 1700s soldier reenactment, and will join in. Wives and children do candle dipping, weaving, etc. Very programmed event. Otis Cultural Council will assist; not heard yet from Sandisfield. Arrive Friday, spend the night, Saturday night candlelight tour (opens to public); then again open on Sunday, when it returns to being a colonial camp. Held rain or shine. Wish to recognize PTA as supporting with schedule of events.

Read Across America: Kathy Couch

Kathy C. is working on Read Across America with Bethany Mielke (who is out recovering), but will be seeking someone to help her this spring. She is also looking for someone to take over for next year. Aimée MacGovern announced she is interested in stepping in, and will contact Kathy C. directly.

Screen Free Week: Chris Keller request

Chris requested if he could have his annual walk event be held on a Monday or Tuesday, because he will be so busy preparing for the 1700s soldier reenactment. Screen Free Week scheduling will accommodate his request.

School Committee Meetings: by Sherry DeCelle

Sherry provided an update on recent issues discussed at FR school committee meetings December/January: A Joint Planning committee has been formed between FR district and Southern Berkshire Regional School District (Sheffield, Egremont, etc); they are exploring shared services. The joint planning committee's next open meeting is Jan 25 at 6:30 pm in the school library. A group of parents attended the January FR school committee meeting to ask them why they are not exploring shared services with the districts with whom FR already has a relationship with via Tuition Agreements (Berkshire Hills: GB or Lee). The committee offered up several reasons but after an extensive discussion, voted to form a committee to reach out to Berkshire Hills and meet. In light of the fact that Otis and Sandisfield do not have a middle or a high school, they work with neighboring districts (through tuition agreements) to send students into one of the aforementioned districts (GB or Lee) after deciding on tuition amount which comes up for negotiations with the renewal of those agreements. GB will come up for renewal again in two years; Lee, we believe, is every year. In any event, there is a big push by the state to think outside of the box with regards to how districts organize themselves in the face of rising costs and declining enrollment. It is very important for parents to pay attention to these issues; there is potentially a direct impact on their children and what their options are for middle and high school in the future. Parents are encouraged to attend school committees meetings and joint planning committee meetings, so their voices and their opinions can be heard. Another noteworthy decision: the school committee, in light of their conversation with SBRSD, and the uncertainty of the future, voted to name Tom as Superintendent for the upcoming school year; he will also continue to serve as Principal. The committee did not explore other options.

Meeting Adjourned: 4:55 pm