

Goodwin PTO Meeting Minutes

Mar 11, 2015

Goodwin Music Room 6:30–7:30

Present: Kristin Hempel, Randall Walikonis, Alexia Smith, Richard Weyel, Jen Scanlon-Passmore, Jearl Clark, Meghan Silliman, Tracy Rittenhouse, Barbara Mellone, Melanie Ellis, Chandra Lownes, Susan Muirhead, Noaris Burgos, Kristin Zadnik, Ann Caranci, Ellen Tulman, Alaina Guyette, Tutita Casa

Recorder: Alexia Smith

1. Call to order: 6:35
2. Randall Walikonis (Chair of Board of Education): Two main concerns at the moments: 1) budget and 2) superintendent search.
 - a) Proposed Budget: many people worked together to draft budget. Four meetings have taken place. A 4% increase to the budget has been approved by the board. In the recent past budgets have experienced zero/small increases because much trimming has taken place. Big costs at the moment include insurance for employees and negotiated cost of living increases for employees. Proposed budget has been sent to Town Council who are now reviewing it. Increased line items include technology since many computers are getting old (roughly \$50,000). In the past attempts were made to keep computers running but many are now more than 5 years old and need to be replaced. Most other budget items are staying flat. If the budget increase is not approved, then programming will be cut (loss of teachers, programs, etc.). Concern about class sizes remain (notably some classes at the Middle School and Southeast). The Board of Education needs to get the budget approved through the Town Council and the Town Meeting in May.

Curriculum coordinators: Language Arts coordinator retired last year. This year there was no Language Arts coordinator and there is general concern that the lack of a person this year could undermine the need for next year. Money for a replacement was removed from budget by Town Council. Funds have been reinserted by the Board of Education to cover salary for an umbrella language art/math curriculum coordinator. Currently there is a lack of oversight over curriculum both vertically (between grades) and horizontally (within grades) and the need for coordinated oversight is recognized. The Board hopes not to lose strong oversight of math instruction. It is important that teachers have support from a coordinator and access to development education.

The Board will wait until a new superintendent has been hired before hiring a specialized Math curriculum coordinator. The new superintendent may have expertise or a vision for math and language arts. Money in proposed budget covers a join curriculum coordinator position for someone with administration certification.

Tutita: expressed concern over state of education within town and nationally with respect to new demands of Common Core. The lack of coordinator with math expertise in the town is a problem. The district will

not see the impact of the lack of support for many years, but it will come. Because of the challenges of the Common Core, we are now in a critical period of transition and additional support is required. Is math a priority and what could role of a coordinator take?

Randall: the concern is on the radar. Having a person who understands all of the new math requirements is very important. Money in budget could be transferred from an administration position to a teaching position. In part the move forward will depend upon the new superintendent's vision. Also need to have oversight for science and social studies. Expect to see some support for math program.

Support for proposed budget needed from residents: The Board has received many emails, letters, and in-person support at meetings backing the proposed budget. Continued support is important and Town Council would benefit from similar support at upcoming meetings. It would be useful for residents to contact Town Council with thoughts on the budget, stressing the importance of maintaining high standards of education in Mansfield. The more people who attend the meeting to support the increases, the better! A 4% increase is the biggest proposed increase in recent years and will likely meet with resistance. Some residents oppose increases to education budgets arguing that the amount of funding per student in Mansfield is much higher than in other towns in Connecticut. Compared to other towns within CT, Mansfield is low on the list. There will be a need to counter misinformation at upcoming Town Council meetings. Best to express opinions early in process (i.e., at March meeting).

23 March (7:30): Town Council Meeting. Public comment allowed.

8 April: Board presents budget to Council. Closed meeting.

13 April (7:30): Budget public hearing. Public comment allowed.

With a 4% increase, the mill rate for home owners should not go up and may slightly go down (as a result of increased business within the Downtown area). Tutita will look into the actual cost of a 0.5% mill rate increase.

Would be useful to advocate for curriculum director and 2 coordinators. The power of families should not be underestimated. At last meeting parents spoke for 90 minutes and made a difference. Community support for playground at last Town Council meeting swayed vote. Was contentious but was unanimously supported. Best way to advocate: in person, followed by letters (on the Thursday before the meeting).

Tracy: suggested blocking a time at the meeting for parents to attend. Bring children wearing school colors to demonstrate mass support for proposed budget increases. Encourage 4th graders to speak. Parent representative speaks while supporters stand. Do three times: one for each elementary school. PTO will send out a reminder prior to the meeting.

- b) Buses: late buses have been a big issue and concerns will be raised at next Board of Education meeting. Current contract with bus company lasts for one

more year. The Board will consider opening up for bids from other companies next year, maybe sooner. Preschool buses: plan to keep same number of buses as this year for upcoming year. No current plans to cut middle-of-the-day bus. If put out to bid, may end up paying higher amount which could affect scheduling. Every year there is some adjustment at the beginning of the year.

- c) Superintendent search: Dr. Kisiel is now acting superintendent. He has a lot of experience and has performed well in districts that have problems worse than Mansfield (e.g., Manchester). Search committee for a permanent superintendent has now been formed. Three search firms will be interviewed and one will be selected to run the search. The search firm may conduct focus groups/surveys to determine level and type of need/expertise. Hopefully will go through one round of a search and secure someone for the summer/beginning of new school year (will depend upon the success of the initial search and the amount of notice a successful candidate needs to give). The search may take longer. Focus groups will be important since people need to be heard.

3. Officer's Reports

a. President's Report

- i. Announced teacher grants. Funded 1st grade grant for 2 mini iPads. Will continue to work with Terry Fers to attempt to find external funding for Android for speech therapy. Terry was encouraged to apply again in the fall in the event that external funding was not secured.
- ii. Nominating committee for board: please reach out if you are interested in being on the board or helping with the nominating committee.
- iii. Fund raising for PTO: will write a letter announcing events, thanking parents for financial contributions, asking for additional donations.
- iv. Applebees: fundraiser where children serve food. Benefits go to school. Good idea to think about for next year.
- v. May PTO meeting: need to change date to Tuesday 5 May 2015 owing to conflict with other school events.

b. Vice-president report: nothing to report.

c. Treasurer's Report:

- i. Budget included below.
- ii. Quiet month.
- iii. Susan: motion to accept budget. Jen seconded.

d. Secretary's Report:

- i. Minutes from last meeting submitted to Goodwin PTO website.
- ii. Now posting agendas online several days before the meeting.
- iii. Meghan: Motion to accept minutes from last meeting. Richard seconded.

- e. Principal's Report:
 - i. Blue Ribbon: Goodwin nominated but school did not get the official letter until the end of February. Application due 20 March 2015. Four schools within the state nominated. Committee of 18 people working on application including parents, teachers, staff members. All teachers are providing information. Susan is writing all of the essays. Goodwin applied for Blue Ribbon 10 years ago and consensus was that one voice was needed to enhance coherence of essays. Examined 8 schools who were awarded Blue Ribbon and Goodwin looks great! Essays are being sent out to committee for review and feedback. There are strict word limits for each of the essays. Goodwin stands an excellent chance of receiving the award!

4. PTO Business

- a. Silent auction: soliciting items and doing well. Email will be sent to parents requesting donations. Updating description of what a silent auction is since many parents don't know. Moving auction to a location that is more visible. Do not currently have a plan for advertising outside of school community. More money will be made if non-Goodwin parents come. Southeast has a sandwich board. Goodwin has 3 wooden boards in the shed. Jen: could advertise through new Mansfield Connecticut Connection website.
- b. Mileage Club: board members will meet soon to discuss how to move forward with the club in the spring. Many items to iron out, but should be a success. Looking for parents to lead 3rd/4th graders and a second parent for K-2nd graders. Need more volunteers to help punch card (hopefully many will return). Looking to start an afterschool program for 3rd and 4th graders. Excellent turnout and children enjoyed it.
- c. Big Whale Bash (16 May 2015): Christine will need coordinators (sub-committee chairs) to oversee volunteers, events, advertising, etc. Previous coordinators will help to train new volunteers. Working on finalizing budget. Will send flyer to publicize event. Will likely run from 11 to 3pm to straddle sport events of day.
- d. Tri-basketball Tournament (20 March 2015): Stuffed animal mascot for Goodwin has been purchased. Will be marched out by one of the students. Girl scouts, cheer leaders, half-time activities, concessions organized. Game 1: SE vs Vinton; Game 2: Vinton vs Goodwin; Game 3: SE vs Goodwin. Invitations have been sent out to all local politicians, Town Council, superintendent. Food: Moes, Dog Lane Café, Insomina Cookies all providing percentage of takings to schools. Requesting large sheet to make banner for each school. Students can all sign it. Need people to volunteer at table to take donations, run raffle, concessions stand, etc. Focus on community, fun, being healthy, sportsmanship. Encourage people to wear blue. Perhaps students could make whale tails on sticks to wave.

- e. Turn-off TV week: sock hop (1 May 2015) planned for last day of the week. Many activities typically done during turn-off TV week are now being done in Spirit Week next week. Will ask ambassadors to develop a new list of activities for Turn-off TV week. Mary Dudas is currently working on the event.
- f. Next year's board: need to increase efforts to recruit.

5. Adjourned: 7:55

Treasurer's Report

Goodwin PTO Treasurer's Report
Profit & Loss Statement
Feb 11, 2015 – March 11, 2015

Starting Amount		\$19187.15
 <u>Income</u>		
Parent Donation	\$50.00	
Bowling with Boys	\$32.02	
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Total Income		\$82.02
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<u>Expenses</u>		
PTO Pizza	\$28.71	
PTO Sitters	\$25.00	
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Total Expenses		\$53.71
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Profit / Loss	profit	\$28.31
Box Top Balance		\$2,786.34
Balance		\$19,215.46