

May 22, 2023
Rowe School PTO Meeting, 6:30-8 PM
Draft Minutes

Officers Present: Rita King, PTO President; Kayla Theriault, Community Building Chair; Jennifer Rent, Fundraising Chair; Bianca MacDonald, Secretary

Other Attendees: Bill Anton, Incoming Rowe Principal; Jaime Bourque Cobblah, Rowe Teacher; Maria Nelson; Rowe Teacher; Ashley Eiler; Emily Davis; Molly Hemkins; Laura Paul; Janna Stefanowicz; Damon Yakovleff.

I. Welcome and Introductions

Steph called the meeting to order and participants introduced themselves.

II. Introduction and Q & A with Incoming Rowe Principal Bill Anton

Bill introduced himself and shared about some of his professional history and personal reasons for moving to Maine. Bill shared that he is currently a superintendent of schools in Rural Vermont that includes 5 school districts. He shared that he has children in the Boston area and in Nova Scotia and geographically the move to Portland makes sense for his family.

Q: When is your first day?

A: Last day of work in VT is 6/30/23 and he starts his job as Principal on July 3, 2023.

Q: How would Bill approach community building with a focus on inclusion at Rowe?

A: Bill admired the work of the PTO and school to arrange playground meetups and engagement of additional community resources to make these successful. He shared that he is excited about the diversity in the Portland Schools. He reports that he has had past success with meeting people where they are to build connections.

Q: It has been challenging for teachers and students to develop a sense of community within the school day. Challenges include lack of a symbol to rally around, e.g. a mascot, the building layout naturally separates grade levels. Book buddies in some grades have been a success in building connections between grade levels and students. How can we help teachers to feel excited about their work and like their work has a bigger meaning?

A: Bill shared that he would want to observe the things that are currently working well and build on strengths. He shared that he had the opportunity to be superintendent in his current position through the 3 years of COVID and observed some strategies that school communities utilized to recreate a sense of community and belonging in school. He cited an example of a morning sing at one school in his district.

III. Approve March Meeting Minutes

The March meeting minutes were shared electronically and the group voted unanimously to approve.

IV. PTO Executive Committee Nominee Vote

Nominations for all open board positions were voted on and unanimously approved.

The 2023-24 PTO Executive Committee will be:

Stephanie Walsh, PTO President

Ashley Eiler, PTO Vice President

Janna Stefanowicz, Treasurer

Kayla Teriault and Emily Davis, Community Building Co-Chairs

Audry Bartholomew, Secretary

V. Fundraising Update - Jennifer Rent

Calendar Raffle

The calendar raffle raised \$7467. Overall the team including solicited great donations and raised more than was anticipated through raffle sales.

Recommended adjustments for future raffles would be:

1. to allow each child in the school to enter one raffle for free.
2. Specify that "all raffles" purchases can only be applied to each even distribution to each raffle. People can not divide the 30 raffles themselves.

VI. Community Building Update

A. Teacher Appreciation - Janna and Kayla

Teacher appreciation was a success. The community donated plenty to make the event a success. Teacher Maria Nelson shared that the staff really appreciated the PTO's effort.

Ideas for next year:

1. Find a new option other than tacos for the catered meal.
2. Try to engage Rowe families who own local businesses in contributing to teacher appreciation.
 - a. Idea that maybe room parents can help to gather resources about these community resources.

B. SpringFest

Raised \$4000 despite this being a community event above all else. Silent auction baskets and Sponsorships are the main sources of revenue from this event.

Ideas for next year:

1. Prioritize transportation

2. Find ways to encourage teacher participation.
 - a. Idea: try to access Title 1 money to pay teachers for their time to attend Springfest and to pay for transportation.

C. Rowe Night at the Ballpark

With 63 tickets sold this event was not as well attended as it has been in the past.

Possible problems include:

1. Holiday weekend is not ideal
2. People are busy
3. 5th grade education day at the Sea Dogs was the day before the event

Ideas for next year to make sure the community connects:

1. Encourage people to wear Rowe gear
2. Identify an area for Rowe families to meet and sit together

VII. Budget Overview

A. Income - total \$30,000

Walk-a-thon - \$15,000

Restaurant Fundraisers - \$1000

Calendar Raffle - \$7500

SpringFest - \$4000

Box Tops/ Clynk/ Amazon Smile/ Hannaford Helps provide additional income

Spiritwear - breaks even in terms of cost and expense

B. Expenses

Enrichment - \$6000 (\$14,000 budgeted)

Kindness Day - \$300 to whole school for supplies

Purchased new shelves - for PTO storage

Purchased coffee maker for PTO events

1. The group brainstormed ways to outreach teachers to access enrichment money and ideas for future PTO spending.
 - a. Ask administrators to help to allocate money?
 - b. Utilize parent volunteers to provide teacher with time to plan for enrichment
 - c. Idea to provide all students and staff with a piece of spirit wear
 - d. Grow clubs through PTO financial support and finding ways to improve accessibility to clubs e.g. transportation, scholarships.

VIII. Room Parents

A. Challenges

1. People not wanting to be a mouthpiece for the PTO.
2. Difficulty getting contact information for families.

B. Ideas for room parents moving forward

1. Think of room parent work in terms of grade level rather than individual classrooms?
2. Useful to facilitate carpooling and transportation?
3. Help teachers spend enrichment money?
4. To encourage parents to be engaged with the PTO?
5. To engage teachers in sharing what they need and to engage them in PTO initiatives?
6. Change the back to school ice cream social into a grade level event rather than all school?
7. Using a survey to assign people to specific events is a great way to disperse the workload.

IV. Wrap Up and Adjournment

Rita shared that the new executive committee will meet in the summer to set a calendar and determine the budget for the 2023-24 school year.

Question to the group, did people prefer the 4 quarterly 1.5 hour meeting or would the group prefer monthly 1 hour meetings?

- The group agreed that fewer meetings is better.

Rita adjourned the meeting.