

January 11, 2022
Rowe School PTO Meeting, 6:30-7:30
Approved Minutes

Officers Present: Rita King, PTO Co-President; Mark Bower, PTO Co-President; Starr Soul-McDonald, PTO vice-president; Kayla Theriault, Community Building Co-Chair; Emily Bishop, Community Building Co-Chair; Steph Walsh, Treasurer; Bianca MacDonald, Secretary

Other Attendees: Barbara Fletcher, Rowe Principal; Andi Summers (Foundation for Portland Public Schools (FFPPS)); Sarah Swenson, Rowe Teacher; Rana Abbas; Michelle Waring; Leila Pike; Jennifer Evans; Meghan Torrieri; Luis Torrieri; Marci Gagnon; Alicia Peters; Jennifer McDermott; Nicole Nguyen; Jon Kleiman.

I. Welcome and Introductions

Rita called the meeting to order and participants introduced themselves.

II. Approve Minutes

An electronic link to the November PTO meeting minutes was provided to participants and participants were also made aware of the availability of minutes on the PTO website and facebook page. The minutes were unanimously approved.

III. Presentation from Andi Summers of Foundation For Portland Public Schools (FFPPS)

Andi provided an overview of FFPPS explaining that it functions as sort of a PTO for the whole school district focusing on parent engagement and fundraising. FFPPS raises 1 million dollars a year.

A. FFPPS initiatives

- a. Portland Empowered - A subgroup of FFPPS focused on addressing the opportunity gaps in the school system. Lead by Pius Ali.
- b. Wabanaki Film Project
- c. Teacher Grants
- d. Families in Crisis and Portland Public Schools Food Fund
- e. STEM - funded the mobile maker space

B. Ways to Collaborate with PTO

- a. FFPPS can provide support for school fundraising and sponsorships as FFPPS works with larger sponsorships (e.g. LL Bean) FFPPS solicits

sponsorships of over \$5000 - there is no need for PTOs to coordinate sponsorships for amounts under \$5000 with FFPPS

- FFPPS has committed \$250 to each school PTO as a sponsorship this year.
- b. FFPPS compiles a list of grant opportunities and can support PTOs to identify grant opportunities and to complete proposals (e.g. provide facts about the district for grant applications)
- c. Spread mutually support on another to spread messages through FFPPS newsletter and PTO newsletters
- d. FFPPS to help to coordinate a meeting to include all PTO leadership

C. Parent Questions/ Comments

- a. Rita would love to coordinate with other PTOs
- b. How can PTOs improve outreach to new Maine families?
 - This is a relatively new initiative for the FFPPS. The district does not have enough resources to effectively meet the needs of and out reach new families. FFPPS is in the beginning stages of this work and is also working to bring Portland Empowered in on the conversation.
- c. Is there a way to coordinate annual fundraisers between PTOs and potentially split the money raised? FFPPS does coordinate some fundraising events and is working to organize a teacher event at Bunker Brewing this year.

IV. Stargazing Event Update from Jonathan Graffius (Rowe Outdoor Art Teacher)

Stargazing event will be held at Rowe School on March 4th from 7-8:30 pm. Rain date is scheduled for 3/11/2022. Bus transportation will be offered at 6:30-7 pm and pick up spots are TBA. The event is part of a school wide exploration of the book *Stargazing*. Peaks Island author, Jamie Hogan, will be reading the book to students via Zoom at school. The school has purchased copies of the book for classrooms.

A. Activities

The school gym, cafeteria and outdoor space will be used for the event.

Activities include:

- Art projects
- Free hot chocolate and popcorn
- Author book signing
- 50/50 raffle and donation jar
- 3-4 telescopes have already been secured for use at the event and we are asking the community to lead a telescope if they have one
- Ed Gleason from the USM planetarium will provide education answer questions

- Author Reading
- Music and expressive movement portion is in the planning stages
- Take away gift for students

B. Currently still planning

- a. Coordinating info for flyer with Jamie Hogan
- b. Signage for the event
- c. Logistics including traffic flow, where to put tables, etc.

V. Updates from Barb

- Students are thrilled to be back after the break. Working in January to review procedures and routines.
- Students are doing well with social emotional learning at school.
- Staff and student absences have been a challenge this month and meeting the needs of the school on a day to day basis can be challenging.
- Staff is working to prepare devices for a possible remote learning scenario and teaching students login and how to use learning apps
- The district is really trying to avoid remote learning if possible and believe that a short-term closure would be the most likely scenario as opposed to long term closures.
- There were 14 positive pods in the school wide pooled testing last week.
- Working to acknowledge and support everyone with stress and anxiety related to COVID

Parent Questions

- Are kids given the option to eat outside everyday? And does staffing ever impact kids' ability to eat outside?
 Yes, Outdoor space is available and supervised during every lunch. Barb will also reinforce this message at mealtimes to make sure that kids are aware of the option. All of the grades except 3rd have recess right after lunch so they are prepared to be outside. There are no gear requirements for outside eating.
 There are always 2 staff at lunch one inside and one outside.
- How is the school doing with outdoor gear supplies?
 Barb believes that we have most of what is needed at this point. It does need to be organized.
 Mr Graffius got a grant for the school for \$1500 for outdoor gear from Berlin City Auto. He negotiated a deal with Bogs and was able to get 50 pairs for the school in various sizes.
- Can the lost and found be accessed by parents?

This is currently challenging parents can make arrangements to come to the school to look through. Also please label clothes.

- What are the protocols for close contacts with COVID at school?
Parents will be notified if there is a positive case in your child's classroom. District numbers are reported on a weekly basis through the district Website.
- Can parents volunteer to help organize clothes or to supervise at lunch/ recess?
Yes, parents can volunteer at school. Volunteers must be screened and fully vaccinated. Reach out to Barb or Joanna if you are interested. PTO will facilitate organizing the clothing donations the school is currently waiting for shelving.
- Clarify the meaning of resolving COVID symptoms?
Must quarantine for 5 days of onset of symptoms following a positive test. May return after feeling better and fever free for 24 hours.
- How does pooled testing work on holiday weeks? And concern about delay in results.
Pooled testing will occur on Wednesday on the week of MLK day. Result will be returned on Friday. The reality is that even when tests are obtained on Monday there is a delay before results are reported back to the school. This is why layered measures (e.g. masking, distancing, outdoor time. pods etc) continue to be in place.
- How is morale at school?
Staff is incredible and continues to rally to meet the needs of students. Staff is working so hard and the days are really exhausting.

VI Community Building Update

Winterfest has been moved to Springfest. It will likely be in mid-May. The event was moved due to current COVID concerns and to provide time to plan a really great event. PTO is looking for parents to help plan and/ or to volunteer at the event. We have already raised \$700 in sponsorships.

VII Treasurer's Report Highlights

Donation Drive and Pop Up Spirit Wear Sales in December was a success and PTO collected 20 gift bags for Amy Leonard to distribute to families in need.

Anonymous Donation - the PTO facilitated acceptance of \$1000 in funds from an

anonymous donor to help social worker, Amy Leonard and Nurse Wendy to meet immediate needs of students at Rowe.

Sponsorships. The PTO is looking to get more income from sponsorships this year to support events such as Stargazing and Winterfest. All of the sponsorship levels and information can be found in the PTO newsletter.

VIII. Wrap up and Adjournment

Rita thanked everyone for attending and adjourned the meeting at 7:37 pm.