

**October 17, 2018**

**Rowe School PTO Meeting, 6:30–7:30 p.m., Library**

**DRAFT Minutes**

*Attending Officers: Kayla Theriault and Caitlyn Watson, Co-Presidents; Amy Hayes, Vice President; Rita Sullivan King, Treasurer; Kristin McCabe, Secretary; Jennifer Rent, Fundraising Coordinator (absent: Lory Davis, Community Building Coordinator)*

*Other Attendees: Sandy Illingworth Baier, Susan Baxter, Heather Beggs, Mary Wellehan, Fiona O’Grady, Gillian Poisson, Moriah Brown, Principal Dawn Kenniston, Assistant Principal Sarah Sirois*

**Welcome and Introductions**

Caitlyn distributed the agenda and called the meeting to order. Everyone introduced themselves, and Kristin circulated a sign-in sheet.

**Approve Minutes from Previous Meeting**

After circulating a copy of the draft minutes from last month’s meeting, which had been shared electronically via the September 21 PTO newsletter, Kristin thanked Amy for taking the minutes and asked if there were any adjustments or questions. No one had any; the minutes were approved.

**Budget Update from Rita**

Rita distributed a budget sheet reviewing PTO income and expenses to date, totaling \$5,726 in income and \$4,145 in expenses since July 1. She highlighted that spirit wear has been a stronger money-maker than expected and that the coming month contains the two biggest planned fundraisers: the walkathon and the auction, budgeted to bring in a combined \$17,000.

Rita also explained the new per-pupil formula for funding enrichment activities, which has received positive feedback from teachers; in the past, the PTO fielded separate enrichment requests as teachers presented them and some felt the process was unclear and inequitable. This year, the PTO has designated a total of \$13,000 for integrated arts and other enrichment, which translates to \$31 per student. Another \$3,200 is designated for project-based learning, or \$7.50 per student. A written explanation of the new plan was sent to teachers early in the year, which explains that they can claim the funds by either submitting receipts to Rita or sending her an Amazon wishlist for items they want the PTO to purchase.

**Auction Update from Jen**

Jen said the preparations are going well for the November 2 auction at DiMillo’s. About \$10,000 worth of donations have been received—not counting the classroom projects, which are only partially completed but looking amazing. The only donations she is still trying to solicit are (1) a couple of nice

downtown restaurant gift certificates to accompany high-end hotel packages and (2) a few more pieces of jewelry to round out a planned display.

Volunteers are still needed for helping during the event itself, and a Sign-Up Genius solicitation has gone out to those who expressed interest. It will be distributed more widely later this week.

More than volunteers at this point, Jen wants attendees, and she sent an Evite earlier today to begin gauging attendance. She needs to know the approximate number of attendees to order enough hors d'oeuvres in advance; because the DiMillo family is providing food and wait staff at cost, they might not be able to accommodate increases on site.

### **Rowe Updates from Dawn**

Dawn said the playground construction is progressing very quickly, and most of the pieces of equipment that were already funded are now installed, as is the foundation for other equipment expected to be purchased in the future. Paving will be done over the next few days. The sports field will be finished last. The high climbing structure (16' at center) has some concerned, but staff will instruct children carefully about how to use it safely, and there are 2' of mulch underneath.

Workers and staff are still determining the best time to remove or relocate the fencing to allow students on the new equipment; some of the landscaping may be fragile and would benefit from more time to take root before being played on. A compromise is also possible, such as opening the new basketball courts for play before the surrounding planted areas.

The next school newsletter will contain more details about the playground plans as well as new parking and traffic patterns. The smaller turnaround circle that was in place in September has been discontinued to provide more parking spaces; cars now need to navigate the full parking lot loop at drop-off and pick-up. Still to come: designated visitor parking (8 spaces near the entrance), signage, and another bike rack. The school will also hold a bicycle safety assembly soon.

Finally, Dawn noted the school's big playground fundraiser is now ready to announce: The Ghost of Paul Revere in concert at the Elks Lodge, December 1, adults only. Ticket sales will be opened soon, first to Rowe families and then to the general public. Stay tuned!

### **Bingo and Book Fair Update from Kayla**

Kayla shared a report from Lory on the recent family bingo night, saying it was well attended and popular. Many students participated and enjoyed the special dance party at the end.

The next PTO community-building event will be a Happy Wheels roller skating evening on Friday, December 14.

Kayla is also in the process of planning the fall book fair with Scholastic. It will be held during conferences in November. Stay tuned for a volunteer solicitation for staffing the fair.

### **Walkathon Update from Jen**

The walkathon will be held during the school day October 31. Two teachers (Rene Custeau and Amanda Butcher) and a parent (Michelle Roy) are co-chairing the event. They have mapped out a new route (since students can't currently circle the school building, due to ongoing construction) that includes a section through Sagamore Village and loops back through the school parking area; the final route is still pending approval.

Michelle is sending home student packets this week. Jen explained how the walkathon works—with students collecting flat donations and then participating with their class during the school day, and incentives for individuals and classes with the highest donations or most laps. Most of the volunteers needed for the event are already covered by those who signed up at the beginning of the school year, but Jen will circulate a Sign-Up Genius solicitation to the community later this week.

Caitlyn noted that although the event is on Halloween and is a nice way for students to direct their excitement and energy that day, Rowe doesn't allow kids to wear Halloween costumes to school. Dawn added that the staff will probably suggest a theme for the day's dress instead, such as wearing certain colors, to still make it festive.

### **Courtyard/Learning Garden Update from Susan Baxter**

Susan conveyed a message from Laura Newman about the courtyard garden project. Laura is looking for a parent committee to take over the project, which includes plans for an outdoor classroom, pond, raised beds, fruit trees, and more. Many of the pieces have been planned or offered as donations, but fundraising (specifically the auction and Ghost of Paul Revere concert) is needed to fund the full courtyard plan.

Dawn explained that the fence enclosing the courtyard, which is a prerequisite for building a pond, might be fundable through the school's building contingency fund. The fence they want to purchase is \$12,000 and takes about 2 months to be delivered after ordering it. It also would need to be installed in the spring, once the ground has thawed, as would the pond and most other garden features. The administration won't know for another couple of months whether enough contingency funds are available for the purchase, so the PTO might be asked to fund the fence initially and then be reimbursed by the school so the PTO funds are available for the rest of the project.

Moriah said she will be assigned to the garden project as part of her role through Cultivating Community, which already has her teaching lessons to Rowe 3rd and 4th graders and working in the cafeteria. Jen mentioned that she is also coordinating with Moriah to partner with Garbage to Garden for composting food/paper waste in the cafeteria and at PTO events, and the company has requested a meeting with administration to plan the collaboration—which Jen will be organizing. Dawn (or Sarah?) noted that the cafeteria already has a great composting system in place thanks to custodian Mark Madison, except that many students are too short to reach the counter where waste is sorted, so there's still some work to do to make it more accessible. Jen agreed that Mark should be part of the Garbage to Garden conversation.

The group agreed that the PTO Greening Committee needs to be re-formed, to include Moriah and others to be determined, to plan and prepare for implementing the garden plans in the spring.

### **Wrap Up / Questions**

Dawn invited the group to offer suggestions for the “Rowe Updates” portion of the agenda at the next PTO meeting. Kristin requested an update on the multiage/double class setup and how it was working. A kindergarten parent (Gillian) expressed concern that she was worried about her student going into 1st grade in a combined class. Dawn said parents are welcome to visit classrooms to observe how they function. Sarah added that the double classes are actually more than double what we might have been accustomed to, thanks to the reduced school budget that raised class sizes across the city (not just at Rowe) this year, and suggested that the PTO might consider mobilizing during the next budget cycle and current district-wide study to advocate for smaller classes. Dawn mentioned that there is a meeting on Oct 22nd at Rowe to address this and also noted that Rowe has lost one teaching position in each of the last 3 years.

The meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.