

CHAMPLAIN PTO

PTO Meeting Minutes January 26, 2021

Attendees (via Zoom): Vanessa Berman, Tammy Charbonneau, Angela Duquette-Catlett, Sarah Legault, Erica Houskeeper, Ranjit Buddy Singh, John Stanton-Geddes, Brettan Martelle, Ruth Henry, Katlyn Morris, Joe Resteghini, Christine Hagan, Rebecca Grannis, Christine Weinberger, Chelsea Tedder, Sarah Heath, Janet Breen, Alisha Laramée, Simon Bird, Heather Chernyshov, Mike Fisher, Mia Hockett, Kerrie Mathes, Grace Per Lee, Meghan Fitzpatrick, Carrie Roy, Abby Dery, Betsy Patrick & Laura Lipton

Updates and Q&A with Principal Joe Resteghini

Principal Joe Resteghini shared that new protocols are in place since the return to school after December break. Classes are further separated, including on the playground. He shared that a grant which he and Kristie Callahan applied for, for funding of an outdoor pavilion, was approved for \$5000. This money will be applied to a locally built, with local wood, 28x20 outdoor pavilion to be used as an outdoor classroom space. Joe hopes that the pavilion will be built during the Spring / Summer of 2021.

Aziza Malik and Tammy Charbonneau took a class this past summer teaching kids to be stewards of the lake. Champlain Elementary was the first recipient of a massive map of the Lake Champlain Basin. Students were able to walk on this map and learn the history and geography of the lake.

Joe expressed how proud he is of Champlain educators for their enthusiasm, professionalism and kids first spirit! He also expressed his thanks to the PTO and families who helped fulfill teacher's wish lists. Joe is hopeful for late spring / early summer events to be held on the school grounds, including a land dedication (with current 6th graders who participated in last year's Abenaki program), an Olympics style event and raising of the LGBTQ flag.

Parents at the meeting asked about Green Up day, and whether Champlain would be able to participate. In years past, Noyes Tire has presented to the 5th graders the life cycle of a tire. On Green Up day, Noyes Tire collects tires to recycle by donation. Games, a bake sale, car wash and a raffle organized by Noyes have also been part of the Green Up day event. Donations and proceeds from the event have been utilized for the 5th grade year-end field trip, with any remaining funds going back to the PTO. Joe is on board, as permitted with COVID restrictions and Kerrie Mathes volunteered to coordinate.

Parents at the meeting also asked whether students are on track with their learning and curriculum. Joe shared that like all schools throughout Vermont and the rest of the country, students are behind. Educators are focusing on the foundation, but some concepts will be missed. They are covering the things most important for students to go on and be successful at their next grade level. SPAC testing will still take place. Joe is not sure how it will be calibrated with the school year. Tammy did share that despite COVID students have learned to be kinder, more resilient and grateful. Kids want to be in school and there is more joy.

PTO updates

Kerrie Mathes will be coordinating the next teacher / staff lunch, which will be taking place in early February, probably from Great Northern.

PTO Vice President Vanessa Berman shared that the PTO spring budget was approved to include the following funding: (2) teacher / staff lunches, outdoor classroom space, 4th-5th grade art project, Charlie Cart, Yearbook, Parent Resiliency meeting, Nurse Brian appreciation, 5th grade year-end celebration and ongoing community support. The PTO does plan on some fundraising to offset some the costs. PTO Treasurer Rebecca Grannis shared PTO's current balance and shared that the grant round for teachers is in process.

The next PTO meeting will be on February 16, 2021 and will include a parent resiliency meeting facilitated by Joelle van Lent. Parent questions will be requested prior to that meeting.

Fundraising ideas included:

Champlain Elementary gear – collaborating with the mural artists Juniper Creative Arts on a design. Meghan Fitzpatrick volunteered to coordinate this, with potential assistance from Brettan Martelle on a printing lead.

Online auction – PTO has all of the auction items and is looking for a coordinator for this.

Cookbook – Grace Per Lee suggested a cookbook inspired by the pandemic: meals folks have made from food distributed by the school district, recipes from Chef Kaye, etc. Alisa Laramee shared that she and Aziza Malik had created a cookbook last year which was focused on crops grown by New American and indigenous communities. It was created as a teaching resource. Chef Kaye made the Abenaki cornbread recipe, which was then distributed to 4th grade students. Perhaps a collaboration between the two ideas for one book? Grace has requested some volunteers to assist her with this project.

Heather Chernyshov raised the question of outstanding milk money balances. Can the PTO help assist with paying off student's milk money balances? Milk is included with the free lunches, but not as a stand-alone item. The lunch menu has been posted on the Champlain Elementary Facebook page, and also on the back of the blue note.

The PTO will be looking for people interested in filling board member positions in the next few months.

Angela Duquette-Catlett, current Box Top coordinator for the school, is looking for a successor. Box Tops for Education are collected throughout the school year, and shipped twice a year (November &

March). Credit for most Box Tops is now given through the Box Tops for Education app, where you scan your store receipt for credit. Angela is hoping to find a successor prior to the March first ship date so that she can provide assistance and help facilitate a smooth transition.

School Board update with Board member, Mike Fisher

Mike Fisher shared the school board Budget Development Update. The board started the year with bad news from both the state and locally, in terms of necessary funding, which looked to result in a 12.8% tax increase for Burlington residents. The board worked very hard to bring that number down, and a 6.88% tax increase was approved by the board last week.

Big increases in the budget resulted from budget growth & debt services (\$2.8 million), BHS downtown relocation (\$2.4 million) and BTC relocation (\$460,000). The Superintendent and board are working with the Governor to get some financial assistance with the BHS downtown relocation which would decrease that line item by \$720,000. The government assisted with COVID related needs. The board asked Superintendent Flanagan to review the budget for additional savings. He found \$1 million in savings and found further reductions: eliminate vacant para positions, decrease in central office budgets and decrease in elementary lunch supervision budgets would add an additional \$360,000 in reductions.

Burlington has seen a steady downward trend in enrollment for K-5th grade. Enrollment in middle and high schools has been relatively stable. Mike asked Superintendent Flanagan if there was a need to consolidate or eliminate classrooms at the Elementary level. Superintendent Flanagan said that was no currently necessary.

Additions to the budget included: increasing communication & support for multilingual families (including during summer break) & strategic plan implementation.

The school board did see a \$6 million surplus for fiscal year 2020. The was due to less programs being run and less people within the school buildings (COVID) and good fiscal conservation. The board plans to apply \$4 million of the surplus to reduce to fiscal year 2022 tax impact.

Parents at the meeting asked Mike whether the board would be asking PTO's for assistance in educating the community to say yes to the budget / tax increase. Mike shared that the board is planning to create a one-page informational sheet with language that can be shared. The school board is allowed to educate the community but not advocate for the budget approval. Mike did point out that Burlington residents have a history of supporting education and approving school budget increases.

The school board recognizes that the bigger funding issues that needs to be addressed is the equalized pupil count. The formula was created in 1997. School districts throughout the state could see tax decreases if the formula was updated. The board is currently working with state senators to see that this issue is addressed.