

Minutes – PTO Meeting  
April 6, 2015, 6:30 p.m.  
Manhattan Middle School Library

Those in attendance: Libby Black, Shannon Collier, Joanne Corson, Mary Dineen, Jennifer Dingman, Arlene French, Chris Goodman, Shanna Henkel, Loli Hudson, Meena Keuer, Kristin Kusmierek, Peggy Livingston, Michele Marshall, Meghan McCracken, and John Riggs.

**I. Welcome: Michele Marshall**

Michele, the PTO Chair, welcomed everyone and said that this is our last night meeting of the school year. The May meeting will be during the day. We want to encourage others to get involved. We will vote on officers in the May meeting. All offices will be open for voting. Erica Johnson, who is now in her first year as treasurer, has offered to serve a second year. Officers are not to serve more than two consecutive terms unless approved by the directors.

**II. Principal's Report: John Riggs**

**A. Manhattan Palooza**

Mr. Riggs said that the Manhattan Palooza is set for April 28<sup>th</sup>. He and Ms. Corson said that we are buying two drums, with money raised from a California Pizza Kitchen fundraiser.

**B. New York City Trip**

From April 19-24, a group of 48 students and about 12 adults will go to New York City. The students will visit museums, Harlem, tall ships, the 911 memorials, and the zoo in Central park, attend acting workshops, and take double-decker bus rides. The last preparatory meeting will be April 7<sup>th</sup>. At that meeting the students will find out which groups they are in and get their itineraries. There will be a fundraiser for the trip on April 13<sup>th</sup> at BJ's restaurant. Steve Hefferan has helped a great deal in preparing for the trip. The trip is open to art-focus and theater-focus students.

**C. Testing**

From April 13-23, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders will take CMAS test. Seventh graders are taking social studies tests. Eighth graders are taking science tests. For each of those grades, there will be two tests of 1-½ hours each. Sixth graders are not taking CMAS tests. CMAS testing is taking less time and fewer days than PARCC testing. The best forum for raising concerns with testing is the legislative branch of the government.

A teacher mentioned that next year funding may depend on the test refusal rate, that the BVSD superintendent has indicated he does not support all the testing requirements, and that reportedly Arne Duncan, the Secretary of Education, wrote to BVSD concerning BVSD's low testing rate.

Mr. Riggs said that our PARCC participation rate was 78%, with the 8<sup>th</sup> grade having the lowest level of participation. There have been days in which all he did was field calls and respond to emails about testing. We have signed onto PARCC because we opted out of some No Child Left Behind requirement(s).

**D. Enrollment Numbers**

Next year we are losing our current 8<sup>th</sup> grade class of about 200 and bringing in a 6<sup>th</sup> grade class of about 150. Because of the lower total enrollment numbers, we will need to reduce staff. We may increase 6<sup>th</sup> grade numbers slightly because four students were placed by mistake into Platte instead of Manhattan and because others did not decline other offers in time. Mr. Riggs intends to approve administrative transfers into Manhattan.

We are the only middle school in BVSD that pulls from all elementary schools in the district. However, we are bringing in only about 70 students from outside the neighborhood, as compared to about 120 who live in the neighborhood who decide to go elsewhere. We are trying to figure out why. The top three schools that students choose over Manhattan are Southern Hills, Platte, and Platte Choice. Mr. Riggs said that we lose very few students during the year, with most leaving due to social conflict.

A parent said that this year, it has seemed that most schools have longer wait lists than in earlier years. Mr. Riggs said that the only middle schools with an increase in their 6<sup>th</sup> grade classes for next year are Platte and Casey. Most classes at Manhattan recently have been 160-170. Ten years ago, Manhattan had about 300 students, as compared to about 500 now.

**III. Teachers' Report: Libby Black, Stephanie Spencer and Meghan McCracken**

The parents and teachers discussed some perceptions in the community that may be losing students. Ms. McCracken said that we may have a focus group on why people choose Manhattan. Ms. Black said that the high school students who have been in touch after middle school have almost always said that Manhattan prepared them well, with some saying that the 8<sup>th</sup> grade at Manhattan was harder than the first year at Fairview. She also remarked about how collegial the atmosphere is among the teachers at Manhattan. Kristin suggested possibly developing an information sheet for prospective parents with the teachers' views of teaching and Manhattan.

**IV. Treasurer's Report: Erica Johnson**

Erica was not present. Michele distributed the treasurer's report for the month (Attachment A).

We have ordered speakers for the auditorium from the \$2,000-\$3,000 left in the Magic Phoenix proceeds. We need to decide how to spend the \$10,000 from Whole Foods; we want a lot of input on this. Because the Whole Foods income is not donations from parents, we do not feel it needs to be spent now. There was some discussion of making another request for bag

credits from Whole Foods. The original request was made three years ago, and we no longer have a copy. Some suggestions for using the money: 8<sup>th</sup> grade party, ice cream truck.

**V. Manhattan Palooza: Meena Keuer**

This will be April 28<sup>th</sup> (as mentioned in the Principal's Report). Meena said that the student jazz bands will play. There will be other 15-minute musical sets as well. Last year, the Palooza raised \$2,400 for the music department, which helps Mr. Johnson buy and repair equipment, purchase music, etc. The Palooza will be free for 5<sup>th</sup> graders and younger children. Parents would pay admission.

The "Manhattan in the Park" event will occur in the fall.

**VI. Science Garden Update: Jennifer Dingman**

Jennifer met with Mr. Feeney and Ms. Greene about the idea of updating and improving the garden near the tennis courts. They discussed putting in raised beds and having the science curriculum tied to what we do in the garden.

Jennifer is meeting on April 7<sup>th</sup> with Ms. Greene to decide how many beds, to work on or submit a proposal for money, and to set dates for volunteers to work. Barb Hoyt, our treasurer from past years, worked on the garden last year. For the summer, Jennifer will set up a Google docs schedule for families each to take a week to maintain the garden.

Some parents suggested linking planting during 6<sup>th</sup> grade to harvests in 7<sup>th</sup> grade and combining a spring garden club with a fall cooking club. Another parent had some input based on having started the Garden to Table program at Creekside Elementary. Due to lack of curriculum tie-in, the idea had not spread beyond elementary school. We will need a core group of at least a half dozen parents to maintain this. Someone questioned whether we need raised beds, saying that turning the soil over may be easier without them.

Peggy was surprised with some beautiful pink roses! It was a thank you for being the PTO secretary.

**VII. Gym Letter Update**

The PTO is circulating a change.org petition to help get a larger gym. Our current gym is not large enough even for an elementary school-sized basketball court. The district's bond money did not include anything for a gym at Manhattan.

**VIII. Trip Tracker Options for Next Year**

This was deferred to the May meeting.

**IX. Committee Reports**

None.

**IX. Other Comments or Questions –open time for anyone**

Peggy said that about a year ago she had asked the IRS for a copy of the PTO's application for tax-exempt status, with the hope that it had some information that we no longer have. The IRS sent a package in March. It included a signed copy of the 2005 bylaws that matched the unsigned copy in the minute book.

Peggy also noticed a discrepancy between the bylaws and the Articles of Incorporation. Under the bylaws, the members vote at the annual meeting to elect directors. Under the Articles of Incorporation, there are no voting members. We need to decide which system we want and amend either the Articles of Incorporation or bylaws accordingly. Michele, Arlene, and Peggy will follow up.

**X. Upcoming Events**

April 13<sup>th</sup> – Community Fundraiser at BJ's for NYC trip; starts at 5pm

April 15<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Play

April 19<sup>th</sup> -24<sup>th</sup> –NYC field trip

April 22<sup>nd</sup> – Bike to School Day

April 28<sup>th</sup> – Manhattan Palooza; 6:30pm

April 29<sup>th</sup> – 360 Spring Training

May 4<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> – Teacher & Staff Appreciation Week

May 6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup> - Theatre Class Spring Show

May 15<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade Bowling field trip

May 18<sup>th</sup> – Ice Cream Social for incoming 6<sup>th</sup> graders

**XI. Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be in May. The date is to be determined.

**XII. Attachment**

A: MMS PTO Treasurer's Report: Monthly Report: April 6, 2015