

November 3, 2009

Call to order: 6:55

President's Remarks: George Brodie apologized for cancelling the October meeting, but said with he and others out of town, it would be hard to get a quorum. From his perspective, he said, October was a good month for the school. As a school and community, "we're doing pretty well." We have a lot of work to do in regards to the budget. But "I've been very happy and think we're making lots of progress."

Principal's report: Pam O'Connor noted current attention to swine flu. Schools can't keep records of who has and who doesn't. Physicians don't test and people don't go to the dr., so numbers wouldn't be accurate. But, FCPS is running absentee numbers. Usually run just over 4% absenteeism for this time of year, now it's 7 percent. Ravensworth has been less than that, "so I think our kids practicing healthy habits and we know you parents are helping with that."

However, she added, we are seeing an increase in tardiness in kids getting to school. We realize traffic can be bad, so if you're choosing to drive them, please add a few minutes to get them here. If they are late, it puts them behind for the day. We're trying to make parents aware of the need to be here on time. But we have some folks for whom it's not just an occasional thing. We know it's not the kids' choice to be late, so we're really looking to the parents to get them here.

Vice principal's report: Tim Paper announced new after school academic help. In fall, we identified kids in 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> who could use extra help and we are doing after-school help. We will identify younger kids in January. Ms. Lejaneu and Ms. Cooke are the after-school teachers for 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>. We need volunteers, as well, to work with kids at end of the school day.

O'Connor: We are hearing from LB students who may be interested.

Teachers/Counselor's report: Maureen Smith said teachers are breathing a sigh of relief to get report cards done at the end of the first quarter. Now, as we are moving into the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter and beyond, we're getting more intense in terms of the work we're getting into. So, we will be seeing new concepts coming up for kids. Things are moving, and very busy on the teacher front.

As part of our school plan this year, we've taken on a philanthropic program for entire school. We are collecting various types of foods from each grade level at different times. Instead of doing something as just a holiday endeavor, we're doing this the whole school year. Parents are notified by notes home in the Wednesday folder. So, if you have multiple children, you could get a letter any month of the year. Food will serve those in our geographic area.

Brodie: Asked that a teacher from each grade update for the newsletter each month.

Maureen: Hopefully it will serve as reminder for people to send in something each month. One of the challenges is in keeping it going through school year. But, it's going well so far. And, you can go ahead and send it in with your child's teacher if you forgot. We would gladly take any contributions.

Sue Reilly: We want to thank the PTA for your very generous teachers' grants. Those are very much appreciated.

Brodie: Mentioned that he talked to reading specialist Ms. Loayza about the PTA's Take Home Reading program. She said it was beginning to take a lot of time away in the morning from organized teaching because the program stretches 35-40 minutes in the morning.

O'Connor: We were having more and more trouble getting volunteers to come and for those who did come, they felt compelled to read with all children and it was stretching later and later into the morning.

Reilly: We will send home report to parents about the change. Books will still be going home each night.

Dina Gross: Said she's taught at other schools where they did Take Home Reading, but didn't have parents reading with kids.

Reilly: Years ago, had many parents – too many – here volunteering and we just don't have that anymore. The valuable part of the program is that we are still finding the appropriate books for the students based on their reading levels and they will be taking them home every night. We were very lucky starting out that the PTA could give us enough money to have a large selection of books.

Willcox: From parents' standpoint, it was great to come in and hang out with the kids, but I will defer to the teachers. I would hate to see it disappear because someone last year left.

Gross: It's not that, it was just hard to get parents to come in or you'd think they were coming and they wouldn't show up.

O'Connor: Agreed that things have changed in the number and reliability of volunteers. So, we looked at what's the best way to approach this.

Gross: Mentioning other volunteer opportunities, said she has asked parents to come in and read to her whole class and that works very well. But noted more demands on teachers and students.

This year, kids get in at 8:30 and at 8:35, they're already being pulled into other places, like special ed. Under old Take Home Reading, parents started at 8:30 and were supposed to leave by 9.

Reilly: Teachers find different ways for parents to volunteer. I do that through social studies curriculum to ask parents to come in and talk about how they celebrate a particular holiday.

Gross: Will have fire company and electric company come out, as example. Lots of ways to volunteer.

Treasurer's report: Denese Fields said Sally Foster wasn't quite what we budgeted, but did net \$6,500, including what we spent on promoting. Winners party was fun, kids had a blast with money machine and fuzzy monkeys promotional went over great.

Box tops -- \$592 coming from box tops. At 67% of our goal of \$1,600 for the year. 6<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grades neck and neck for who will win.

We'll make \$3,000-plus on Book Fair, which is slightly better than last year.

Within \$100-\$200 of breaking even on Spirit Wear for the year.

Coupon book sales start Nov. 11. If sell 100 books, \$15 per book = \$1,500. Teachers get a free book if 95 % of students either bring book back or pay for it. If we sell 200, make up Sally Foster deficit. It's really easy to get your money back. Sell for \$30 each.

Buy from Amazon Web site and school gets 4%. On PTA Web site. Start on our page.

Already surpassed Spirit Night budget income with \$545.

Brodie: That's probably the easiest thing we do all year.

Programs report: Don Willcox said GRACE Art enrichment program is doing well, in spite of losing three parents who put hundreds of hours into it. Got write up in Examiner for being good enrichment program.

We need a volunteer to head cultural arts, which means booking events for school assemblies. Look for curriculum-development, grade appropriate. Doesn't have to be for all grades at once. Do about three per year. I went to marine biologist, and that was great. Like to find something different.

Outreach report: Lisa Daniel recognized Amy Ryder and Roger Baker for developing an automatic email function on the PTA Website for Weekly Updates. Said it's been a big help in delivering information.

Also recognized Nicole Suris for helping plan a playdate on the Ravens playground for new students and families. Unfortunately, the rainy October weather did not cooperate and it had to be cancelled. Will try again next year to make annual event early in the year.

Ravensworth Counselor Maureen Smith gave a special guest presentation on how parents can help elementary age students succeed in school. [LINK HERE]

Other business: Brodie talked about the FCPS budget shortfall. Language immersion programs are being considered for elimination. 18% of Ravensworth students are on pupil placement for immersion. If those kids are no longer here, our numbers would drop from 525 to 425. Encouraged everyone to register for FCPS budget meetings on the Web site.

Janelle Field: Asked if it is possible for Ravensworth to take part in academic programs like Pyramid Challenges through Lake Braddock Secondary School?

O'Connor: Not aware of it, but can look into it.

Lisa Daniel: Is it possible to put a request in the teachers' mailboxes about their volunteer needs.

O'Connor discouraged and referred to PTA room parents to meet teachers volunteer needs. Also, may contact Tim Paper to volunteer to tutor in math and language arts. May not be in your child's classroom and must be during regular school hours.

Nicole Suris, room parent coordinator, said some room parents say teachers haven't asked for parent volunteers because they haven't had success in the past.

Gross: has asked parents in the past to come in and talk about careers and no one volunteered.

Reilly: Had only one parent volunteer to come in and talk about holiday traditions.

Yearbook chair: Please contact her for items throughout the year.

Reilly: Dec. 5, Girls on the Run will do the Reindeer Run at 8 a.m., Reston Town Center. Come out and cheer them on!

GROW Team coordinator: Had a GROW team work day last Sunday, sparsely attended. Only have on five or six Sundays in the year. Need more volunteers to make GROW team an enrichment program.