

J.B. Watkins Elementary School PTA Meeting Minutes January 10, 2012

The General Membership Meeting of J.B. Watkins PTA began at 7:01 p.m. on January 10, 2012. The following people were present: Niki Mason, Stephanie Gonzalez, Colleen Kopidis, Dawn Owen, Jason Benedict, Angela Castillo, Shelley Neofotistos, Mandi Buccafusco, Beth Gray, Tammi Slovinsky, Tracey Malkie, Jessica Winston, Catharine Anderson, Anne Counoupas, DeAnne Watson, Julia Trebour, Michelle Quiram, Sara Ward, Melanie Suddreth, Kris Perko, Jarica Davis, and Dr. Marlene Scott.

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m. by Niki Mason, President. Niki welcomed everyone to the meeting and reminded everyone to sign in.

Officer Reports

President: Niki Mason

Niki wished everyone a Happy New Year and introduced the following items for discussion:

PTA Calendar – Niki asked that everyone look at the PTA calendar to make sure the information listed is accurate, and to notify Niki of any events that are not yet listed.

Teacher Checks – The teacher checks were distributed last week and this year teachers received a bit more money.

Use of Rewards for Wish List Items – Niki asked that anyone heading a committee that deals with reward points coordinate with her so that the points get redeemed and items can be purchased for the school.

Vice President: Stephanie Gonzalez

Diggity Dudes Performance – The Diggity Dudes performance will be on Friday, January 20. The first performance will be from 9:30-10:00 a.m. for grades K-2; the second performance will be from 10:15-10:45 a.m. for grades 3-5. You can check out their website at <http://thediggitydudes.com/>.

Treasurer: Colleen Kopidis

Colleen mentioned that copies of the latest budget worksheet were available near the sign-in sheet.

Secretary: Dawn Owen

Dawn asked if there were any additions or corrections to the minutes of the PTA meeting on November 15, 2011 with those minutes being posted on the PTA website since November. No corrections or additions were made, so the minutes stand approved as written.

Administrator's Report : Dr. Marlene Scott

Dr. Scott indicated that the kids came back from Winter Break on January 2 and were quite excited to be back.

She mentioned that in light of the tragic allergy incident that recently occurred at one of the Chesterfield County elementary schools, an article has been posted in the Lantern which explains the school's expectations and policies for dealing with children with severe allergies. She asked that parents of kids with allergies turn in the yellow medical cards at the beginning of the year, and that parents bring in any necessary medications which will be kept in the Nurse's office.

A parent commented about the allergy policy and said she had been in contact with Watkins about two bills recently introduced by Senator Barker; one in the House and one in the Senate. The new legislation would require all schools to have EpiPens onsite in the event of a severe allergic reaction. The danger of adverse reactions to the EpiPens is very slim. Concern was voiced by other parents that some parents may not have the financial means to provide EpiPens for their children (especially since they have to be replaced yearly) and that the schools should have them as part of their Safety Kits.

Dr. Scott indicated that the County will be providing more information and guidelines outlining what is required of the schools.

Dr. Scott mentioned that the new Violin Enrichment Program started today, as well as a remediation program which aims to assist kids identified by their teachers as needing additional help. If parents have any questions about this program, they should contact Mallory Smith.

Lastly, Dr. Scott spoke about the REB Awards for Teaching Excellence which awards grants to teachers of up to \$12,000. A form was passed out that provided details about submitting nominations. Dr. Scott encouraged parents to submit nominations for J.B. Watkins teachers, and mentioned that last year Mrs. Riley came so close to winning. Dr. Scott referred parents to the website, <http://www.tcfrichmond.org/receive/nominate-an-individual-for-an-award/reb-awards-for-teaching-excellence/>, for nomination criteria and online nomination forms, which must be submitted by February 23 at 5 p.m.

Teacher Liaisons

Beth Gray – representing 2nd Grade

Jessica Winston – representing 3rd Grade

Beth Gray thanked the PTA for the generous teacher checks.

Committee Reports

Box Tops: Kris Perko

A request for \$471 was submitted before the December 31, 2011 due date. Articles have been placed in both the Lantern and the Coalminer regarding "Click and Earn" box tops. Once parents establish an account on Box Tops, they can log in every few days and earn free box tops just by watching a few short videos. The Box Tops website also has coupons for all their products which are much better than those found in the Sunday paper.

Currently, we are just under our target goal of \$2,000. The next box tops collection will be in mid-late February.

Campbell's Soup Labels: Mandi Buccafusco

Labels were deposited in early December and our current balance is over 13,000 points. The box for collecting labels is still located in the Front Office. Mandi has the school wish list and will be going through the catalog to see if there are items on the wish list that can be purchased in the catalog.

Niki mentioned that there may also be items not on the wish list that could still be of great value to the school.

Carnival: Niki Mason for Maggi Lewis

The carnival is still on despite construction and is tentatively scheduled for Saturday, May 19, from 11 am to 3 pm. Because of the construction in the playground area, the carnival will likely be held in another area this year. No specific location has been identified yet.

Chess Club: Anne Counoupas

The Chess Club continues to meet the first Friday of every month and the tournament starts in April. New kids are always welcome.

County Council: Sara Ward

The last County Council meeting was before Thanksgiving and was thinly attended -- only one other parent from Robious Elementary School attended. Reflections updates were provided at the meeting, and the council members asked that school reps talk with parents about the Shop Chesterfield First program to find out which businesses parents would like to see participate in this program. Parents should call the County Council line at 475-4155 with suggestions.

The County will be using a new company, Blackboard Connect, for its robo calls starting in November 2012 which will save the County a significant amount of money. Parents shouldn't notice any changes in the calls.

Sara encouraged parents to go the Board website, <http://www.boarddocs.com/vsba/chesterfield/Board.nsf/Public>, to view various documents, read minutes of the County Council meetings, and keep abreast of current information.

January 22nd and 23rd are PTA advocacy days for the state. Any parent interested in advocacy training and in visiting with the General Assembly should contact Sara Ward for registration forms. The registration fee is \$5 and must be turned in by Friday, January 13. The event will be held at the Holiday Inn Koger Center in Richmond. Talking points will be emailed out on Monday, January 16.

Expansion Task Force: Jennifer & Joe Boehman

Jennifer and Joe Boehman did not attend the meeting, so parents asked that Mr. Benedict provide an update on school renovations.

Mr. Benedict said that construction in the front of the school started a bit later than expected, but that the company accomplished quite a bit during the two-week winter break. Areas in front of the school will be blocked off, which will create a parking shortage, but this is being done to ensure construction efficiency and safety. Late February/early March is the target date for foundation to be placed in the back as there are still many trees out there, with a similar timeline for the front music/art room. The goal is complete areas of operational space for children first. The air conditioning unit will be revamped and completed in April, just in time for the hot weather. There may be some days that no construction will take place due to SOL testing. During summer vacation, the front office and bus loop will be shut down completely for construction of the new parking lot. The Construction Blog, which was created to keep parents advised of renovation status, is now up and running on the PTA website, <http://jbwconstruction.blogspot.com/>.

Fit Kids: Niki Mason for Maggi Lewis

The third session of Fit Kids starts on Tuesday, January 17 through Tuesday, March 1. The donation to PTA thus far has been \$600!

Membership: Julia Trebour

Mrs. Crute's class has chosen Friday, January 20 for their pizza party. Additional memberships have been trickling in over the last few weeks.

Candela's Night: Niki Mason for Brittany Krebs

The next Candela's night is Monday, February 6, from 4-9 p.m. We made \$292.83 dollars at the December Pizza night. Other Candela's nights are scheduled for March 5, April 2 and May 7.

Chick-Fil-A Night: Niki Mason for Laurie Valerio

The next Chick-Fil-A night is Tuesday, January 24, from 5:30-8:00 p.m. We need volunteers to help out with Spin the Wheel. Other nights are scheduled for February 28, March 27 and May 22.

Monkey Joe's Nights: Niki Mason for Laurie Valerio

The next Monkey Joe's night is Friday, February 24, from 5-8 p.m. The last Monkey Joe's night of the school year will be on Friday, April 6.

My Coke Rewards: Niki Mason Holly Wray

We now have 12,667 points which can be used to purchase catalog items. Holly wanted to let parents know that in order to enter codes on MyCokeRewards.com, zip code 23114 must be used to locate our school so that points are credited to JBW.

Newsletter: Dawn Owen

The December Coalminer came out on December 1 and is up on the PTA website. The next newsletter will come out on March 1.

STEM Night: Niki Mason for Barbara Cohen

STEM Night is a combination of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math. Barbara is reviewing flyer and final details with Dr. Scott. Registration for creating science projects for this event starts on January 23, with registration forms and details to be available online at the PTA website.

Staff Appreciation: Shelley Neofotistos

The staff enjoyed their Café Catura gift card and beautiful cookies provided by Cookies in the Cupboard (a local business owned by a JBW parent). A soup luncheon sponsored by the 3rd grade will be on January 18. In February, the staff will enjoy a chocolate bar.

Student Directory: Niki Mason for Betty Jo Fulghum

The Student Directory is almost complete and just needs some minor formatting changes. It should be to the printer by end of week and printing takes approximately one week. Hope to distribute the directories by the end of January.

Talent Show: Tammi Slovinsky

The Talent Show is scheduled for Friday, May 4, with auditions on April 18 and 19, and dress rehearsals on April 25 and 26. We are soliciting ideas for this year's theme. Tammi mentioned that she would like to have a co-chair for this committee, and would appreciate parent volunteers to help out with the auditions and dress rehearsals. An nList email will be sent soliciting theme ideas and requesting volunteers.

Mr. Benedict volunteered to be the MC for the evening.

Volunteers: DeAnne Watson

DeAnne requested a list of events in advance that will require contact of potential volunteers. Also, she requested that parents do not come and eat with their child on Picture Day due to overcrowding in the cafeteria.

Watkins Friends: Melanie Suddreth

Melanie thanked JBW parents for the tremendous amount of toys that were donated and distributed to Watkins families and Children's Hospital, and extended special thanks to the Guidance Counselors for all their help.

Ways and Means: Jarica Davis

Purchase of Promethean Boards - Jarica spoke about the request to purchase two Promethean Boards - one for the 1st and 2nd grade area and another for the new addition (there is already a Promethean Board in the 3rd Grade Round). Promethean Planet is offering a price match program whereby they will match funds of up to \$3,200 for the purchase of new boards. The funds used for purchase of the boards must come from a fundraiser, and can be from fundraisers that have already taken place. The boards are currently 50% off at Promethean Planet and this sale is good through the end of May.

Mr. Benedict spoke of the advantages of having Promethean Boards for the teachers and students, indicating that these boards are 21st century blackboards. The portability of the boards benefits the entire school, and several teachers already know how to use the boards so that no training will be necessary. In addition, all the school computers already have the necessary software. The cost of the board we are looking to purchase is approximately \$700 per board (at the 50% sale price).

Mr. Benedict then gave a short presentation of how the Promethean Board works and how it promotes interactive learning by showing an example of a Kindergarten lesson. Teachers can create their own lessons and then download to the computer, or use any of the thousands of free flipcharts provided. Dr. Scott mentioned that these boards are so beneficial because more than one class can participate in a lesson, and they are great for visual learners.

Jarica mentioned the possibility of using funds from Martins and Target, and possibly also from the Cherrydale fundraiser which surpassed expectations this year. The goal is to get as much funding as possible to help purchase as many boards as possible. Another parent suggested the use of Kroger dollars as well, but that program is point/catalog-based. Jarica mentioned that we have earned approximately 163,000 points from Kroger thus far.

It was brought up by the PTA Treasurer that we may have to wait until the end of the school year when everything is finalized so that we have a better idea of monies available for purchase of these boards, and that any donation from PTA towards the purchase of the boards would need to be voted upon.

Another parent mentioned the possibility of public school grants, but obtaining grants for JBW would be challenging because it is not a Title 1 school. Because of this, it was suggested that we pursue private corporate sponsorships.

Holiday Shop - Jarica mentioned that the Holiday Shop was quite a success and that there were many parent volunteers and fifth grade volunteers. Jarica thanked the front office staff and teachers for their support. The goal was not to have this event be a fundraiser, but rather a fun event for the students. We made a profit of \$273.60. At this point, we're not sure whether we'll have the Holiday Shop again next year. Dr. Scott mentioned that perhaps holding the Holiday Shop on a weekend might be better so that it does not take away from classroom time.

School Supply Kits - Jarica spoke about the convenience of working with a school supply kit company which will provide school supplies/kits that can be specifically tailored to our school's needs. It was mentioned that we are currently working with a school supply company, School Supplies and More, and that they are great to work with because they do everything and are a local business.

Niki suggested that Jarica compare the various school supply companies and find out which company works best for our school and provides the most benefits.

SupportZing - Midlothian Middle School and Midlothian High School are already using SupportZing. This service benefits parents and the school, as well as local businesses. Jarica is meeting with them next week to see if we can get the program started.

WEP (Watkins Enrichment Program): Niki Mason for Maggi Lewis

The Spring WEP session will run from Wednesday, February 8 to Wednesday, March 21. Registration forms will go out at the end of January.

WOW: Niki Mason for Maggi Lewis

The next session will be Wednesday, January 25. WOW Wednesdays have been averaging 25-30 students per session and parent feedback has been very positive.

New Business

Fundraising/Private Funds for Wish List items (Sara Ward)

Sara mentioned that at this point in time, the school has many needs, including the Promethean Boards, teacher wish list items, landscaping, and another wish list from Mrs. Walker. At one point, we had money set aside for landscaping and Sara wondered what had happened to these monies. Catharine mentioned that there was never actual money collection, only pledges from several businesses.

Any money that had been collected was transferred to the school. Catharine will provide information to Sara about businesses that may be interested in helping provide funds for landscaping.

Sara would like to put together a group of parents that are interested in meeting to set short-term and long-term goals and to prioritize where our money should be spent. It was suggested that this group comprise of Sara Ward, Mr. Benedict, Jarica Davis, one or more JBW teachers, and any interested parents. Once the wish list items are prioritized and goals set, the next step would be to solicit corporate funds.

One parent asked whether the County would be helping with landscaping since they are doing the renovations. Dr. Scott said they will put back what was dug up, but by no means will the grounds be beautifully landscaped. Another parent mentioned the idea of using master gardeners that could help with design and possibly provide landscaping materials.

At some point, Jennifer Boehman will be asking parents for plant donations. Niki mentioned that parents can also donate money to help with things like this in lieu of participating in the various school fundraisers.

Sara asked that interested parents see her after the meeting, and also mentioned that parents should visit the Chesterfield County website (<http://mychesterfieldschools.com/>) and look at the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), which provides information about what the County is getting ready to fund and also addresses problems at Watkins.

Miscellaneous Items:

Niki mentioned a few additional items:

Nominating Committee – We will be in need of a Treasurer for the next school year as Colleen Kopidis will have completed her two-year term at the end of this school year. In order to do that, we'll need to establish a Nominating Committee.

Watkins Wiggle – Niki received an email from Patty Miller regarding the Watkins Wiggle which has been scheduled for Friday, February 17, with a snow date of March 2. Flyers to go home next Friday.

Another parent mentioned the Race to Nowhere showing at Tomahawk Creek Middle School on Friday, January 20, at 7 p.m. The cost will be \$10 if paid in advance online, or \$15 at the door. Because of this showing at Tomahawk Creek (which is so close to our school), most likely there will not be a showing at J.B. Watkins as originally planned.

Niki again reminded parents to sign in before leaving.

Announcements

The next PTA meeting will be Tuesday, February 21, at 7 pm in the Library.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:13 p.m.