

**Minutes**  
**PTO General Meeting**  
**Wednesday, May 4th, 2005**  
**7:30 pm – 9:00 pm**

**Present:**

Maria Rufo-Bueno, Co-President  
Isabelle Paine Thacker, Co-President  
Michelle Roover, Co-Secretary  
23 others in attendance

**I. Welcome and General Business**

***Secretary Report//Approval of Minutes – Michelle Roover***

Minutes from the March 7, 2005 general PTO meeting were presented by Co-Secretary, Michelle Roover, and approved.

***Treasurer Report/Budget Highlights – Eleanor Boschert-Ambrosio***

Because of the Treasurer's absence at the meeting, budget highlights were not covered. Copies of the budget to date were made available to all in attendance for later review.

***Fund the Future Initiative – Isabelle Thacker***

Fund the Future is an initiative sponsored by the Newton PTO Council to encourage the State to provide more money to Newton Public Schools across the board (i.e., special education, regular education). Advocacy is on behalf of every Newton school, not just those who are poorly endowed. Maria and Isabelle will be gathering signatures for a petition that will be submitted to the State on Friday, May 6th and Monday, May 9th. There will be a rally at the State house on May 10th for all those interested and able to attend. Please note that Fund the Future is a statewide initiative, not just for Newton.

***PTO Board Nominations***

The Board is still trying to fill the open Board positions of Secretary and Co-President. A nomination form will be sent out this week via the mailboxes.

***Committee Chairpersons***

There is also a need to recruit several new PTO Committee Chairs for next year, including two new people to chair the Monte Carlo/Spring Auction Committee.

**II. Committee Updates**

***Scholastic Book Fair/Celebrity Readers*** – will run from May 9<sup>th</sup> – May 13<sup>th</sup>. Volunteers are needed to cashier in the afternoons and on Family Night (Wednesday the 11<sup>th</sup>). There will be an opportunity to buy raffle tickets in advance for free books, silent auction items, lunch with Ms. Sanders (music teacher) and an I-POD. Whoever spends \$50 on books will be eligible for a

free raffle ticket. Volunteers are also needed as “escorts” for Celebrity Readers. If interested in helping, contact Maria Galvagno (fair) and Carol McKrill (celebrity readers).

**Tag/Plant Sale** – Saturday May 21<sup>st</sup>. Tag sale donations to be dropped off between 7 am and 9 am on the 21<sup>st</sup>. No clothing accepted. If interested in helping out at the sale, contact Kim Freedman.

**School Appreciation Luncheon** – Tuesday May 17<sup>th</sup>. Volunteers are needed to help cook, clean and set up. If interested in volunteering, contact Heather Dias.

**Color Day** – Tuesday June 7

**Visiting Day for incoming K students and parents** – afternoon of Tuesday June 7 (after early release – exact times to be announced). This year, incoming K students and parents will be given an opportunity to take a tour of the school and to meet representatives from the PTO and Franklin staff.

**End of the Year Picnic/Softball Game** – June 20<sup>th</sup> at 6 pm. Rain date is June 21<sup>st</sup>. Bring dinner for your family, a dessert to share and your baseball mitt and bat!

**Social Action Committee Food Drive** – May 2<sup>nd</sup> – May 6<sup>th</sup>. Specific foods needed for the Newton Food Pantry include peanut butter jars, canned meals (i.e., Chef Boyardee), canned beets, canned peas and canned fruit.

### **III. Principal’s Remarks – Cindy Marchand**

Cindy commented on how fun Monte Carlo Night was this year and that she is now an expert in dealing blackjack.

Cindy is looking for 2 or more parents to be part of the Progress Report Review Committee. This involves two or more meetings during the remainder of year and some work over the summer.

Cindy is also looking for a small committee of parents to participate in focus groups to review the math curriculum. If interested, contact Barbara Saro at 617-559-9090

Cindy introduced Anne Larner and Reenie Murphy from the Newton School Committee.

### **IV. Open Forum with Guest Speakers – Anne Larner and Reenie Murphy from the Newton School Committee**

As a result of cuts (between 1 and 20%) in state aid funding to 2/3rds of schools in Massachusetts, Newton Public Schools have been operating at 20% below state aid funding levels since 2002. Currently, Massachusetts receives about 90% of its funding through local taxes and the remaining 10% through state aid. Recently, there has been a big push to increase the amount of state aid funding to Newton Public Schools (i.e., the Fund the Future Initiative)

and things are looking more hopeful than they did three weeks ago. Making calls to the state and if, possible, coming to the Fund the Future rally are highly encouraged.

The School Committee passed its most recent budget on April 25. This budget proposes to put back 16 teacher positions. The Board of Alderman will review and vote on this budget on Wednesday, May 11<sup>th</sup>. This meeting is open to the public. If passed, 20 teacher positions will be cut (once the 16 are put back in).

There was a comment as to whether the “professional development” line item in the budget is bloated. Anne explained that this line item includes mandatory training for teachers, specialists and curriculum coordinators. There was a lengthy discussion about the value of curriculum coordinators, continuing into a discussion about continual curriculum revisions, accountability to state frameworks and the history, social studies and math curricula in particular.

There is a plan in place to revise the new progress report card system. While it will still be a standards-based reporting system, there will be changes in the format, number of categories, language and opportunities for teacher comments.

Meeting adjourned at 9:05 pm.