



Emerson-Williams PTO
Virtual Meeting Minutes for
Thursday, January 7, 2021

Attendees

Anderson, Rebecca	Carvalho, Stephanie	Carey, Charles -BOE	Conashevick, Stephanie
Dee, Peping	Lesser, Kenneth – BOE	Moore, Anne-Marie	Nunn, Katie
Root, Elisa	Szczepanski, Anna	Smith, Shana	Thakur, Neela
Williams, Leslie	Yatrousis, Nicole		

Welcome

Rebecca Anderson/Leslie Williams

Call to order at 7:01pm.

- Rebecca welcomed everyone to the first PTO meeting of 2021 and wished everyone a happy, healthy holiday season.
- Rebecca welcomed Mr. Carey and Mr. Lesser of the Board of Education (BOE) to the meeting and noted that they are not guest speakers.
- Rebecca reported that the Treasurer position remained open.
- Leslie indicated that the PTO documents were posted in the chat feature for everyone’s review.
- Leslie also wished everyone a Happy New Year.

Secretary’s Report

Stephanie Carvalho

- Approval of 11/12/2020 meeting minutes motioned by Shana and Leslie.
- Stephanie read a letter of appreciation received for the lunches donated to the staff. Leslie discussed the donation and noted that the EWPTO provided gift cards to the quarantined staff who were not present for the day lunch was provided to the staff at school.

Treasurer’s Report

Rebecca Anderson

- The current PTO bank balance is \$14,430.73.
- Currently waiting on a \$30 deposit from Nutmeg Books; \$285 from the Stop & Shop bags; and \$462.20 from the Candle sale.

- The following checks remain pending and are reported to be in the mail. \$7.50 from Box Tops for Education and \$192.90 from Spirit Wear.

Principal's Remarks

Neela Thakur

- Neela welcomed everyone and wished everyone a Happy New Year.
- Neela made a shout out to the PTO and noted that the PTO has not missed a meeting since 3/2020 and noted that the PTO remains committed to the EW community.
- Neela thanked the BOE for their participation in this month's meeting.
- Neela noted that the staff was thankful of the lunch contributions and thanked the PTO and parent who took on the task for the contributions.
- Neela noted that since 3/2020, things have been tough. She mentioned the Black Lives Matter and violent acts. As well as the "atrocious" pandemic and the attack on the Capital on 1/6/2021 and noted that these were heavy and tough topics.
 - She noted that everyone is doing the best they can daily to do what is in the best interests of the children's safety.
- Thank you to the BOE support, parents for the work they do and the teachers who are doing an amazing job. We are looking to easier days ahead and we continue to communicate to get through this.
- Neela mentioned that the New Wednesday Plan will begin on 1/13/2021. There will be a shift to synchronous Wednesdays from 8:30am-12:55pm which will mean there is a set and established school schedule. This decision was made prior to the holiday. The second half of the day will allow the teacher to collaborate, plan and prep the lesson plans. From 12:55pm-3pm will be asynchronous.
- At the last BOE meeting, Mr. Emmett looked at a plan for PK1-1st grade to get kids in school for days a week. The hope would be that there would be a plan in place by the end of 1/2021 as these are the most difficult learners. Mr. Emmett will monitor how things go and the numbers with the virus and then move to incorporate the rest of elementary grade into 4 days a week.
- The Nurse, Mrs. Kathleen Maffuid will receive her COVID 19 vaccine on 1/13/2021 as the nurses have been made part of Phase 1A of the vaccines.
- Neela mentioned that the remaining staff will be a part of Phase 1B to receive the vaccine. It is possible there will be more information forthcoming in the next week. There is no requirement at this time to make the vaccine mandatory for staff.

PTO Liaison

Elisa Root

- Ms. Root shared in the sentiment that everyone was thankful of everyone and the PTO. Staff has noted that the love is always felt and noted the devotion.
- Ms. Root wished everyone a Happy and Healthier New Year.
- Ms. Root noted that there continues to be free breakfast and lunch for all students through 6/30/2021.
- Mrs. Miller had a successful food drive. The pajama day raised \$1300 and she continues to help Emerson-Williams families as needed.
- Leslie also mentioned that the leftover Spirit Wear from last school year was donated to Mrs. Miller for families in need.
- Remote learning behaviors/expectations were sent out both in November/December 2020. The staff continue to remind the children. It is asked that the parents go over the expectations that were sent out by Ms. Thakur and/or print them out.
- There is no school on 1/18/2021 for Dr. King day.
- Winter break begins on 2/12/2021 (which is a Professional Development Day for staff) and ends on 2/16/2021.

- The following staff have joined or are returning to the building:
 - Mrs. Boyd – 1st grade is returning to the building.
 - Blaik Lisella – math tutor
 - Julianna Fannelli and Michael Alessendra are two CCSU educators.

NEW/OLD BUSINESS

- None.

Open Forum:

- Anonymous questions 1 and 2 presented to Ms. Thakur by Rebecca. Neela noted that in regards to the social emotional well-being of the staff that there are 19 staff members on the leadership team. The social emotional well-being is an incredibly difficult and challenging topic to address with regards to the teachers. They are 100% struggling and working long hours. The amount of prep time extends beyond 45 minutes a day and the staff are doing double the work. She noted that the staff are always amazing professionals and always positive and upbeat. She also indicated that the staff have a huge sense of moral obligation to their students.
- Per Neela, the leadership's primary focus is to have continue to have conversations about the social emotional well-being of the staff. She also noted that the Social Worker, Mrs. Miller and Speech Pathologist, Ms. Florio have taken the lead to on activities to boost the morale of the teachers.
- Stephanie Carvalho asked about whether the decision to make Wednesdays Synchronous was made with the consultation of the teachers. Neela noted that the teachers were not a part of the discussions. Mr. Emmett made the decision as he was concerned about the direct instruction 4 out of the 5 days of the week. He is looking to increase the direct instruction for our students. Mr. Emmett supports the asynchronous as well as it has never been done before.
- Rebecca mentioned that Mr. Emmett wants more in person learning but there is a loss in collaboration and asked how the staff are being compensated. Rebecca mentioned that everyone has a breaking point. Neela stated that she was not sure if she was the right person to answer the question but noted that every town comes up with plans on their own and that the decisions come from the superintendents. The teachers are encouraged to come in the building on Wednesdays beginning 1/13/2021 and if they have a conflict, they will need to discuss this with the building principal (this is across the district).
- Neela mentioned that the staff is clear about their struggles with her and these are incredibly difficult times.
- Leslie thanked Neela for explaining Wednesdays. She also asked how services are going to be affected. Neela noted that the paras and the tutors work full days from 8:30am-3pm. There are some adjustments being made. It will be similar to pre-pandemic where students will be pulled receive services.
- Leslie also asked if the district provides support services to staff. Neela mentioned that she believes the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) can be accessed via Human Resources.
- Anna mentioned that she knows what the teachers have to go through and asked what could the teachers use to boost their morale? Neela mentioned that most staff are nervous about the synchronous Wednesdays. Elisa indicated that time is what staff needs. Elisa reiterated that the staff feels loved by the PTO and surprising them with luncheons also boosts their morale. She also mentioned getting items from the wish list.
- Katie Nunn reported that she appreciates the PTO, especially when they feed us. She noted that Neela works hard when we talk about struggling. The staff needs to know they are working hard and she appreciates them. She also mentioned that every once in a while, doing a random act of kindness for one another also helps.
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Next meeting 02/18/2021.

Closing Remarks

Rebecca Anderson

- Rebecca thanked Charles and Kenneth of the BOE for participating.
- Shana noted that she is appreciative of the teachers joining the meeting and sharing their time.
- Motion to adjourn by Shana and Stephanie.

Adjourn: 8:13pm