

NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOL

The Parent Teacher Association of The Neighborhood School General Meeting

Date: Thursday, February 13, 2020

Time: 8:30am

Location: TNS PTA Room

Type: Monthly General Meeting

Notice Provided in Advance: Yes

1. **Meeting called to order at 8:35am.**
2. **Reading and Approval of Minutes:** Motion to approve the [minutes from the previous meeting](#). Motion seconded. Motion passed and minutes approved.
3. **Presidents' Report:**
 - a. **Collaboration with STAR Academy:** We are alternating movie nights with STAR Academy -- one PTA will run the movie night one month and money raised that night goes to that PTA, the next month the other PTA will run the movie night and money raised will go to that PTA. For accounting purposes, setting it up this way made more sense than joint movie nights each time. We lowered prices for admission and food last time and raised more money. Movies nights are not only good for building our shared community, but also helps build a coalition between the schools that can try to address shared issues like library funding since both STAR and TNS contribute to keep the library.
 - b. **Lead testing:** We spoke about the results from the independent testing of water at our last meeting (see the summary in the minutes). We will be sending more communication about the lead test results to the school, but we are taking time to ensure that the communication is clear. In the meantime, the [full test report](#) is available on the web site.
 - c. **Potential TSI Status:** We've talked before about how TNS is designated as a potential TSI school. One relevant piece of news on that front is that a TNS parent will now serve on District 1's Community Education Council (CEC). From that position, the TNS parent will be able to advocate not just for TNS but for other schools that have high opt-out rates.
 - d. **Bylaws:** The executive committee has been reviewing bylaws and has a set of recommendations and we'll talk more about that soon.
4. **Treasurer report:**
 - a. Distributed [Treasurer's Report](#) for review.
 - b. **Cash Position:** A few notes: First, we have some camp payments coming, which is money we hold temporarily but it isn't really PTA money -- there is a matching expense

to account for the money we will pay out, but in the meantime it looks have raised more than we actually have. Second, Art Day is not broken out as a separate fundraiser. We may want to consider moving it out if we intend to make it a regular event in future years. Overall, though, our cash position is strong.

- c. **Budget Outlook:** We are on track. We still need to raise an ambitious amount from the auction, but overall, it looks good. We are estimating a small surplus.
- d. **Reminders:** Letters acknowledging donations for tax purposes are mostly out, but we are still working on a few who donated but we don't have their addresses. If you have questions or are looking for a letter and have not seen one, please email PTAtreasurer@tnsny.org; Please also submit receipts for reimbursement. We don't want to slam the treasures at the end of the year!
- e. **Online Payment for Farm Trip and Ashokan:** There was discussion about setting up separate pages for camp payments and allowing parents who want to donate more to do so online. There is currently a page for the [Farm Trip](#) and a page will be set up for Ashokan. If parents want to make contributions they should select the "other" amount option on the online page and put in the amount they want to provide.
- f. **New budget line for health and safety:** Our water fountains need new filters. In the future this will be a joint expense with STAR Academy, but this year TNS is paying all of it because we did not pay for it last year. We did not have this amount in the budget for this year. The filters cost \$250. While proposals for new spending typically are proposed at one PTA meeting and voted on the next, the PTA approved allowing urgent health and safety items to be proposed and voted upon at the same meeting.

Motion to amend the budget to include \$250 in the budget for health and safety purposes. Motion seconded. Motion approved and the budget is amended.

5. Fundraising Report:

- a. **Overall Fundraising:** We are in good shape! We set ambitious targets at the beginning of the year, in part because we learned the school didn't have the funds for a previously planned teacher's assistant in the younger grades. We agreed to set a budget that would allow for that expense without cuts to the other items we had planned, and agreed to evaluate our revenue outlook mid way in the year. The school really came together and we are just about on target for the goal we set for direct donations for the entire year. That's not atypical -- the bulk of family donations often come in the first half of the year, but it means we do not need to make cuts to our budget. We are on track. Congratulations, all!
- b. **Kinship campaign:** We set a goal for \$25K. We raised in the \$21K range, but we think we raised some money before we officially launched the campaign and suspect we have done better overall in direct contributions because of the campaign. We learned a lot of good lessons to take to next year and consider the campaign successful in many ways.
- c. **Auction:** The auction is the next big focus of the fundraising work. There are many volunteer opportunities -- some at the event, some at home before the event (e.g., sending emails to vendors), and we need items to auction so please help us identify them (more on this later). If you have questions or want to help, email

auction@tnsny.org. There will also be communication through the class parents email lists about this.

- d. **Matching donations:** Please check with your employer if they offer opportunities to match contributions you make. (Only 7% of those eligible take advantage of employer matching programs!) Some even match the time you donate, not just financial contributions. Visit matching.tnsny.org for more information.

6. Principal's Report:

- a. **After School for PreK Students:** Last week, Wingspan informed Pre-K families that Wingspan could no longer provide after school for PreK students, effective directly after the break. Dyanthe reached out to Green Apple Kids, a program that provides afterschool at Earth School, and arranged for that program to come to TNS to provide replacement after school programming for the rest of the year. It was a crisis that was resolved quickly thanks to coordination by Dyanthe, Noemi, Director of Green Apple Kids and pre-K families! Phew!
- b. **Renovation of the Play Yard Playground:** Two years ago, Dyanthe was in communication with the Parks Department, at which time they indicated a plan to (eventually) renovate our playground. She hadn't heard anything else about it until yesterday when she received an email informing us that construction, on this year-long project, would start March 16. Dyanthe responded that this was unacceptable and we need more notice and more communication about the plans and timeline. Previously, when the playground was inaccessible, we took kids to the playground on 1st Ave and 1st Street but that required additional staffing. We haven't seen the plans for the playground and don't know specific renovations, but we are told the renovated playground will be beautiful.

7. Teacher's report:

- a. **Send Back Form Acknowledging Assessments:** Teachers encourage parents to send back the form that acknowledges parents have seen their kids assessment reports.

8. Committee and Other Updates

- a. **Grants:** We are submitting a proposal for capital funding with two parts: first part is funding for both STAR and TNS to create a gender neutral bathroom; second part is to support technology at TNS.
- b. **Advocacy:** Next Advocacy meeting is on Feb. 25. The NYS Standard Test for ELA is on March 25 and math tests will be about a month after that. Advocacy will work to inform parents about their right to opt out of state testing. In early March, we will have a Q&A about the state tests, mostly geared to 4th and 5th grade families because they often have the most questions.
- c. **Farm Trip Fundraising:** We will be having a raffle of Hamilton tickets for the Farm trip. You can purchase raffle tickets in the lobby.
- d. **Auction:** The auction will happen on April 30. The location and catering contracts are just about finalized. We need items for the auction! Friends and families can donate! Craft projects, hotel stays and experiences, time blocks of expertise (yoga instruction! plumbing help!). There will be a form posted on the website or contact auction@tnsny.org for more info.

- e. **Bylaws:** We are required to review our bylaws. We posted a [memo](#) about this and copies were available at the meeting. PTA members are encouraged to take the next month to review. If people have ideas for amendments, bring written amendments to the March meeting and we will vote on them in April. Most of the changes are either required by the Chancellor's regulations or are straightforward changes to clean things up. Two substantive areas of change are on the budget process and officer removal.
 - i. On budget, we recommend a more detailed process that reflects our interests in transparency and participation.
 - ii. On officer removal, the only explicit reason currently named for officer removal is failing to attend meetings. We recommend adding the language offered by the DOE's template bylaws and also specifically name that harassment, discrimination, bullying, and physical violence could be grounds for removal. Please read the [memo](#) for details and share your thoughts with PTAsecretary@TNSNY.org.
 - iii. Discussion about bylaw changes included mention of surveying the school to confirm the time and day of general meetings and that the time can be changed to a different time for reasons of participation.
- f. **Nominating Committee:** We need to set up a nominating committee for PTA elections. Peter volunteers to be on it and seeks at least two additional volunteers. If you are running for PTA office, you cannot be on the committee (and if you serve on the committee and then decide to run, you will need to step off the nominating committee). A lot of the work is spreading the word about the positions so that people can run. We will send something about this out in the newsletter.

9. Introductions: People present introduced themselves (very quickly!)

10. Meeting adjourned at 9:20am.