

PTA General Meeting Notes
April 12, 2013
Mantua Elementary School

The president called the meeting to order at 9:39 AM.

Present at the meeting were:

Executive Board: Lesley Kowalski, Carolyn Stephen, Shannon Murphy, Julie Middleton

School Representatives: Jan-Marie Fernandez, Tina Tingler, Amy Alley

General Membership: Megan Burski Wells, Deanna Firth Freemeyer, Karen Cheng, Kathy Phillips, Wendi Mays, Monica Cameron

President's Report:

Lesley made a motion to adopt the minutes with a correction to the date. Lesley then introduced a special guest, Patty Reed, the Providence District School Board Member.

Special Guest, Patty Reed:

Patty Reed proceeded to discuss many of the major issues going on currently with the county schools. The Boundary Study at Fairfax High School will shift the school population to alleviate overcrowding. Woodson & Frost will go from an enrollment of 97% of capacity to 107%. The shift for Frost will be similar. There will be a hearing on April 17th with a vote scheduled on May 9th.

The school board is considering a change to the boundary study policy so that some boundary issues can be resolved administratively. Boundary studies are resource intensive and take a lot of time. We may be able to make decisions using different procedures depending on the issue. In addition, we are looking at the inventory of both the school and county property as a whole to see if we can find split uses for these facilities.

As you have probably heard, the school board decided to recommend that we hire Dr. Karen Garza, the current Superintendent of the Lubbock County Texas school system and a former elementary school teacher. She will be the first female to run Fairfax County Schools. She is kind, warm, and approachable. She will engage the community and is a team-builder. There are only a few minor outstanding issues to resolve to make this final.

A PTA member asked Patty whether the Superintendent is amenable to later start times for middle and high schools. Patty thinks the new Superintendent is supportive of this. In her opinion, we are moving to later start times. The School Board made a goal to have middle and high schools start after 8 a.m. It's not a matter of "if", but "when". This is a transportation related challenge. A PTA member pointed out that high school sports cannot start before 3 p.m. due to a county or state regulation.

In March 2013, the School Board voted to approve a consulting services contract award to Children's National Medical Center to assist the Board with the goal of establishing high school start times at 8 a.m. or later

Patty believes that the staff rushed to make changes to the County Advanced Academics Program without sufficient study. There are still many outstanding questions that need to be answered. The staff is producing a comprehensive report on this issue, which is due in June. As of now, everything will stay as it is for Mantua and surrounding schools for the upcoming school year.

Thanks to the Ad-Hoc Committee that included Steve Stuban, we are working to make the Students Rights and Responsibilities less punitive and more age appropriate. The committee produced a good document with a lot of good recommendations. We are focusing on implementing those issues that need to be addressed quickly. There will be an array of tools for Principals to use when they need them.

Jan Marie Fernandez wanted to make a few comments about the new Students Rights and Responsibilities. Most of the recommendations in the committee report seem fine, but there are a number of them that will tie principals's hands. She is concerned about the new Parent Notification and Second Chance recommendations. For example, how do we promote a drug-free zone when we have to provide a second chance to kids that bring a small amount of drugs to the school? In her opinion, the hearing process is where 2nd chances should be given, not at the principal level. In addition, the schools need the support of parents for mental health support. Schools can't require that a student get help for mental health issues; the parents have to be involved. Anxiety and depression in our kids is getting worse, not better.

Patty would like to start sending an email to our community on School Board issues and asked for ways to distribute it to our membership.

Treasurer's Report (Carolyn Stephen): There are a few areas where our income looks higher than it is because there are still expenses to be made, benches for the basketball program and payment for the Raccoon Run. The money for the Raccoon Runners goes to pay for registration for the Raccoon Run and for snacks for the girls during their 2-day per week meetings. Amazon is doing well for our first year, but we need to remind people to go to the Mantua

PTA website and click the Amazon button when shopping. Planning for the 6th grade party is in high gear- this activity should net to zero on the balance sheet.

Principals' Report: Woodson Pyramid Art Show was last night and Mantua was well represented. It was great to see the artwork of former students from Mantua who are now at Woodson. Woodson participated in the "PISA" test which is a test given around the world, but not currently in the U.S. Some schools in the U.S. were chosen to participate on a pilot basis. A randomly selected group of 10th grade students took tests in math, reading and other areas. Woodson H.S. had the top score of all schools around the world in reading.

Patty Reed made a comment that the PISA test is new way of testing for us. It's different than the SOL. Look for more information to come out about this test in the future.

Heritage & Literacy Night is April 18th and is open to the whole school. At 6:30 p.m., Heritage night begins in the gym with information and food from different cultures. From 7-8 p.m., students and their parents can visit their child's classroom and see what projects they have done recently in school. For us, literacy crossed all parts of the curriculum- art, math, music, etc.

8 Mantua staff members will be attending a brain and learning conferences at the beginning of May. The PTA helps to fund this activity through teacher and staff development funds. Those who attend will do turn around training for other teachers in the school. A Mantua PTA member suggested that parents would like to hear about how the teachers incorporate what they've learned into the curriculum. Ms. Fernandez says she usually discusses this conference at the Back-to-School night assemblies.

The school received 180 donated laptops. We are spending \$40 each to put in new hard drives. We now have 1 new laptop for each 4th grader to learn keyboarding and for the 5th grade to take the SOL writing test.

We now have a Teacher Tech Team that is doing in-service training on using the smart board in the classroom. For example, one teacher showed us how to look at 3-dimensional figures

Upcoming events include:

Tonight- Big Basketball Game– Mantua Faculty vs. Camelot Faculty

April 15th- Teacher Workday- school closed

April 24th – Administrative Assistants Day

May 6th at 2 p.m.- Kindergarten Orientation

May 13th at 1:30 p.m.- AAP orientation

Ms. Alley mentioned that most students are taking ECART tests right now. Those tests will finish at end of April. Students are also taking practice tests for the SOL.

VA lottery teacher award nominations will be announced at the Teacher Appreciation Luncheon on April 29th. Mrs. Warren, upper grade counselor, had a baby on April 6th. His name is Jaxson. Mr. Mathews is her substitute. The Raccoon Run is Saturday, May 11th.

Ms. Tingler mentioned that the Carnival was amazing.

A PTA member asked about Security procedures at the school. Ms. Fernandez said that the school has a crisis plan and a designated crisis team. We go through different scenarios and practice lock-down procedures, evacuation processes, fire-drills, etc.

Report of First Vice-President for Programs (Teresa LeMair): Shannon Murphy reported on the Spring Enrichment Program. 135 kids are involved in classes Monday -Thursday.

Report of Second Vice-President for Fundraising (Jennifer Epley): The next Restaurant Night is Wednesday, April 17th at Chik-Fil-A. You must have flyer to have funds go to Mantua. In addition, our last Family-Fun night will be Friday, May 3rd from 4:45-6p.m. at Fairfax Ice Arena. We'll have discounted admission, a hospitality room, skate instructor, and Rocky Raccoon will make an appearance.

Monica Cameron announced that the parent resource library is going to be up and running at literacy night.

Julie Lifland sent in the following report on the Carnival:

The carnival was a smashing success, exceeding our expectations with a net of almost \$13,000!! Despite a dismal weather forecast, it turned out to be a perfect day with sunny skies and pleasant temperatures.

Feedback from our post-carnival survey indicates that people loved the additions of the photo booth and cupcake walk. As always, the dunk tank was a huge hit and kids flocked to climb the ever-popular rock wall. Also mentioned were the gym booths, cake walk and hi striker (outside). We re-arranged some booth locations which provided a better flow and less bottle-necking. And having the second cotton candy machine made a huge difference, eliminating the long line and unhappy customers.

Using the credit card readers was definitely a good move. People were happy to have the option and it cut down on cash-handling.

Thank you again to the school administration & staff, parent and staff volunteers, and everyone who came out and supported the PTA!

Old Business:

New Business:

Picture Day- April 18th

FUNGI award- Deanna Firth Freemeyer for her work on advertising

Member Planet website- We'll have a new website next year! Stay tuned.

Meeting adjourned at 10:50 a.m.