

October 19, 2009  
Room 101N  
Mamaroneck High School

## **PT Council Minutes**

Meeting was called to order by President Cindy Habig at 9:20am.

### **I. Old Business/Updates**

- a. **10/2/09 Minutes approved** – send to Laurie Lee (add approval date) so she can post them on the web site.
- b. **Leadership Night Feedback:** It was a great “seed planting” exercise. Have had positive feedback and have some good ideas on how to tweak for the next time.
- c. **Mamaroneck Schools Foundation:** comments sent from Melina Vourlekis (she didn’t come since most people had recently attended the MSF luncheon).
  - i. Accepting grant applications until December 2<sup>nd</sup>. Must be submitted electronically. Main applicant must be a teacher or administrator. There needs to be a second applicant as well.
  - ii. Grant selection committee undergoes a thorough review and examination of the applications and in February will come back to the MSF board with its recommendations for funding. New awards will be announced in March.
  - iii. The work really begins after the grant is awarded. Grant Managers are assigned to each grant to manage and oversee implementation.
- d. **Treasurer (Kristine Budill):** collecting dues for any of the schools who haven’t paid yet. She will also set up meetings if anyone needs any help.
- e. **School Board Update (Rick Marsico):** Superintendent search is underway. Invitations have been extended for focus groups/larger meetings. PTC focus group will be on November 2<sup>nd</sup>. Format will be the same at all the meetings – same 3 questions will be asked – these questions will be handed out in advance. Survey will also ask the same questions.

Questions are:

1. Strengths of the district
2. Issues and challenges
3. Important characteristics of a new Superintendent

**f. Invitations to Board Events:**

- i. For events where Board of Education members (beyond the board liaison) are invited as spectators (i.e., art shows, concerts, etc.), contact Joanne Rice (District Clerk).
- ii. For events where the board member is asked to participate in the event (take an active role in the event – speaking, etc.), contact Debbie Manetta. Make sure to give advance notice.

**g. Teacher Institute (Rina Beder):** New York State Teacher Center program provides professional development within the district. Teachers hired in 2005 and after are required to have a total of 175 professional development hours every 5 years (37 hours per year). These hours include Superintendent Conference days which amount to about 20 hours per year. The classes provided by the Teacher Center are free to teachers (covered by federal grants and the district) and are also open to the public (\$25 per class) and include all different types of classes (ex. Technology, walking tours of NYC). These classes tend to start in the afternoon (4pm) which makes it difficult for parents to attend. A course catalog will be coming out soon for classes starting in January. Rina will let us know when it's available.

**II. New Business**

**a. Web Site Comments:**

- i. District calendar: if you click on an event and ask for a "remind me" email – you will be notified of that event. Nice feature.
- ii. Athletics: if you click on "2009 fall sports calendar" you get the practice schedule, not the games schedule. This needs to be fixed.

**b. Shopping Cards:** PTC and the Chamber of Commerce have worked together in the past and have decided to change the shopping card program. Unlike last year when the shopping cards were used just during the holiday season, there are some thoughts about a new program that would allow on-going benefits to PTA members throughout the year. This would be a good way to promote PTA

membership. Some merchants last year had better experiences than others, if any approach us, be cautious in response since the new program is still a work in progress.

### III. Dr. Paul Fried

- a. **Deficit Reductions (New York State):** Governor's proposal is a \$481,000 reduction to the school budget in the middle of this school year. The proposal has not been approved and there is already a lot of support (i.e., George Latimer, Suzie Oppenheimer) to make sure this will be put through. Since our budget was already planned and approved, the loss would make things very difficult. Last year the stimulus funds and IDEA funds helped to offset the state's reduction, but this year may be different. Dr. Fried indicated that if this does occur, the last choice would be to reduce staffing and they would look for other way to curtail spending.

New York State Teachers Retirement System (pre 1972 is Tier 1, as years went by they created Tiers 2, 3 and 4 – downgrading benefits slightly each time). They are now considering a possible Tier 5 – lower level of benefits, more employee contributions in order to help reduce retirement spending.

- b. **Budget:** The downturn of the economy will also affect the coming year's budget. Based on economic projections, the pension fund alone will require an increase of \$3 to \$3.5 million dollars. They are starting to look at the known costs (salary increases, etc.) and the projections are bleak – will most likely be a substantial budget to budget increase. Hopefully stimulus and IDEA funds will help somewhat but last years 3.83% increase seems unlikely to happen again this year. There is a projected 0% contingency tax increase (based on the CPI and a formula dictated by the state) might mean a reduction of as many as 65 positions which would be devastating. They will certainly need to recommend something higher than contingency to the Board of Education for proposal (factoring in bail out funds, etc.). Additionally, the MTA made concessions last year so they may not be in a position to negotiate.
- c. **Question on Grading Mandated Tests:** State mandated tests must be graded by the school and that takes time and resources. Instead of using the teachers to do this, we hire retirees to help with the grading process. This may cost a little more, but it keeps the teachers primarily in the classroom.

- d. **Retirement Incentives:** Currently the teachers receive a payout of 25% of their final salary when they retire (regardless of sick days used.) The district may try to sweeten that offer for a limited time in order to encourage teachers who might be considering retiring to do so. Up to a point, this is a financial benefit to the district since the cost of the retirement incentive paid to the retiree is more than offset by the lower salary and benefits of the new hire. This attempt to lower total salary costs was tried last year, but for many reasons, (declining economy and relatively few teachers currently at the cusp of retirement) yielded insufficient new retirees and the offer was withdrawn. Due to similar economic and demographic climate this year, it is unlikely that this strategy would yield a different outcome if attempted again, but may be considered.
  
- e. **Field for Kids Update:** Good news from Fields for Kids – donations are really coming in and they have raised \$1.3 million which is close to their goal. If Fields for Kids exceeds their fund raising goals, the district will need to think about the next piece of the project. Money must be in hand before any proposal is put forth. Timing for new field: potentially break ground in June so the field is open for fall sports in 2010. Starting in June means graduation would have to move to another location (i.e., behind the school or offsite – ideas include Harbor Island, SUNY Purchase, County Center).
  
- f. **Leak in Chatsworth School Area:** Last week there was a gas leak on Wendt in the vicinity of Chatsworth School. Gayle Boyle (Principal) and Shelli Owens (Assistant Principal) handled situation very professionally and smoothly. All safety issues were addressed. In the end there was no need for evacuation but it was helpful to know that in this situation, all safety and security issues were covered successfully. In general, the district has come a long way with safety and security – there is a district Safety Committee and there are lock down drills and other types of drills in all of the buildings.

#### **IV. Announcements**

- a. Next meeting will be November 6<sup>th</sup> – location TBD
- b. November 2<sup>nd</sup> is the PTC Focus Group for the Superintendent search

Meeting adjourned at 11:10am.

Respectfully submitted,  
Lori Herbsman

**In Attendance:**

PTC: Cindy Habig, President; Kristine Budill, Treasurer; Lori Herbsman, Secretary;  
Laurie Girsky and Jean Meyerowitz, Communications; Laurie Lee, Technology;  
Rina Beder, Legislation/ Teacher Institute

MHS: Sherri Rozansky, Co-President.

Central: Jennifer Malherbe, Pam Buchmueller, Co-Presidents.

Chatsworth: Joan Capaldi, Laura Livaccari Herzig, Co-Presidents.

Mamaroneck Avenue: Jennifer Vaccaro, Lisa Boren, Co-Presidents.

Murray Avenue: Tracy Owen, Ann LoBue, Co-Presidents.

SEPTA: Amy Lieberman, Cecilia Absher, Co-Presidents.

District: Debbie Manetta, Director of Communications.

Board of Education: Richard Marsico, Vice President.

Guest: Dr. Paul Fried

Approved: 11/6/09