

10-7-2021

**MCS PTO Meeting - In Person on Norwich Green
6:09 pm Meeting commenced**

Stephanie opened the meeting and we went around and did introductions.

Principal Report - Shawn Gonyaw

Shawn Gonyaw greeted all and thanked Cherie for coming to coffee.

Greg and Shawn are hosting a monthly chat with parents alternating with morning/afternoon.

Shawn reported they have hired all of the teaching staff - 14 hires in one summer. Still in need of educational assistants and substitutes. Yesterday was the first day of Covid surveillance testing- 150 or so people (students/staff) have signed up and MCS will do surveillance testing every Thursday. Christina asked if any help was needed, Shawn said they may need help, but first they want to see how it is going.

Mr. Gonyaw reports that inside the school it feels more normal- students are moving to specials and doing full grade level recess. Kids have not had any problems with masks, distancing is difficult sometimes but teachers remind. Mr. Gonyaw shared that this year walking field trips are allowed and guest speakers can come in. Mr. Gonyaw stated he was sad that the traditional fall open house won't happen, but he is hoping for a January open house. Mr. Gonyaw shared that they had REP for the first time in 2 years. The 6th grade did REP and then videoed it out to all the classrooms. Mr. Gonyaw confirmed kindergarten is going to Cedar Circle Farm. Stephanie asked a question about lack of substitutes: will MCS need to close because of lack of subs? Mr. Gonyaw explained that if we have lots of staff out that may be a possibility (they have made do in the past by rearranging staff but if enough staff members are out, and the school cannot function safely then closure is a possibility). The lack of substitutes is not just a problem for MCS- it is all across SAU. You can sign up to sub for just Marion Cross. No teaching degree required, and materials are provided by the teachers. Encouraged all to apply - application is on SAU 70 website.

Jenny Barba asked a question about morale- how is it going- how are teachers feeling? Mr. Gonyaw stated that they are missing time to plan etc. and suggested having help for recess/lunch. A parent asked for clarification on where things are in terms of the volunteer approval process: parents have filled out the SAU volunteer form and been approved by Mr. Gonyaw- but not sure of status of final approval with SAU office. Mr. Gonyaw shared that he would follow up on the volunteer approval process.

Lucy Rojansky asked about the outdoor classroom. Mr. Gonyaw briefly explained the permitting process and rough timeline of hearing and planning and review board process- more than 30 days. He is hopeful for the weather to stay nice so we can move forward. Jenny Barba mentioned parents are following up to make sure there is progress. Mr. Gonyaw shared that one of the great things about MCS is the amount of support that comes from the families.

Update from School Board - Kelley Hersey

Kelley welcomed any who are new, shared that the school board meets every first Wednesday at 6:30 at the library or by zoom, and that participants are welcome. Kelley shared an MCS septic update- the Dresden fields are drilled with test sites and it looks likely that they will be able to handle capacity needed, which is a big step forward for the septic update. Kelley shared that the Superintendent is focused on getting policies updated. Erin Butler asked about septic timeline- Kelley shared that there is not a timeline yet, they are currently focused on building good engineering data so they can put forward a detailed proposal to the voters in March. Kelley shared that even having good detailed data is a big goal and estimated a 50/50 chance of having the data for the spring. Kelley shared that the septic is diligently being addressed - they are working hard to move forward. She shared that the schedule of pumping every two weeks is working for now and will continue. Christina Aquila asked about the town being down a crossing guard- a brief discussion occurred as to where she should direct her concern, and general consensus was to follow up with the town selectboard. Mr Gonyaw said he would reach out to the police to follow up. Stephanie asked if the budget process is happening soon and how people could give feedback. Kelley shared that there will be a draft budget first, then a school board in the auditorium where questions will be taken. She shared that if anyone has a question to please bring it to the meeting. Strategic planning is ongoing. Stephanie asked if the 6th grade would be moved to the middle school and Kelley shared that that decision would be a long term decision, not immediate and they would need forums, surveys, etc and it would need to be put on the ballot. Stephanie encouraged all to attend the school board meetings because they are informative. Mr. Gonyaw shared that the budget process starts almost as soon as the school year starts- so if you have a concern please bring it up sooner rather than later. Erin asked if there was an update on the playground. Mr. Gonyaw shared that the playground is tied into the septic, however they're trying to think of things to do in spite of the septic. He shared that the current plan is to put in swings before snow comes and to move the Gaga pit over. Mr. Gonyaw shared that the bigger plan is to plan out what is wanted for the wooden section and then plan to fundraise in the spring. He shared that there is a playground committee and that now would be a good time to join the playground committee if you have a concern. The playground committee is run by Katie Cormier. A parent asked if there was available state funding for the playground. Mr. Gonyaw shared that although there is state funding, it is based on how many students get free or reduced lunch and MCS has a low percentage of students qualifying for free lunch, so MCS won't qualify for much. Mr. Gonyaw encouraged bringing concerns around the playground up to the school board.

Bylaw Vote -Stephanie Hamilton

Stephanie shared that Alexa Manning (last year's PTO president) and Stephanie amended the bylaws which had last been updated in 1999. The proposed bylaws have been up on the PTO website. Stephanie brought attention to one change- how the PTO elects officers. Stephanie explained that in May there will be a meeting to propose officers and then bring it to the public. Stephanie explained that they used the national PTO boilerplate bylaw language.

Hilary Campfield made a motion to approve the by laws. Emily seconded the motion to approve the bylaws. The bylaws were approved unanimously.

Treasurer's Report – Christina Aquila

Christina Aquila passed around a budget that shows updates on where we are so far this year. She shared that the Membership Drive was a little lower than expected- it ended up being around \$4300. She shared that we do still get some income from box tops collections and that the Spirit Wear sale is going well. Tea towel orders are in, but we don't yet know the income yet- we are still waiting on expenses.

Additional expense that has been added is Coffee and Conversation (meeting with Mr. Gonyaw/Mr. Bagnato). Christina has worked hard to update this- she was thanked by all.

Membership drive: Jessica Eakin, given by Stephanie Hamilton

We had to get a new printer for the directory, so it's a little bit late but is expected by October 12. Will try to extend the date until Tuesday for tea towels.

Jenny Barba- Business Partners

We have some new and some existing business partners. We are at \$2050 which does not include \$250 gift certificates from Norwich Bookstore and Archer Dental. Jenny anticipates being over the \$2300 marker. Jenny listed the sponsors (Archer Dental, Blue Sparrow, Miss Lani, Dan and Whit's, Grossman, Ledyard, Mascoma, Norwich Inn, Norwich Knits, Solaflect, Sotheby's). Jenny shared that all have been great supporters, and excited to help. Jenny would like to acknowledge these supporters. She found the banner and would like to put it somewhere where parents can see it. Jenny requested feedback: How else could we acknowledge sponsors? One idea that was suggested was to put something on the list serve. Hilary Campfield mentioned the Norwich Times and described what she does to acknowledge donors. Jenny explained that her next steps are sending out thank you notes. Jenny also reminded all that if anyone knows any small businesses who would like to participate - please reach out to Jenny.

Celebration Books- Erin Butler

Erin shared that she and Kerri Cramer met with the new librarian. They are meeting again next Thursday to hash out final details. The new owners of the Norwich bookstore would like to continue participating in the 20% off. Erin explained that you can give as much as you like so that the program is open to everyone. They will begin in late October and continue every first Thursday of the month. Erin shared how Celebration Books works: Kids will get their name in the book on a nameplate, a bookmark, and they will get to be the first person to check out the book. Erin shared that we are off to a good start and she is excited to bring this back. The forms went home and copies are on the website if needed.

Bike to School- Rebecca Reed

Rebecca shared that Bike to School happened as scheduled, it didn't rain, everyone was helpful, there were a few snafus but extra help available to assist, and that there were 6 adults along Carpenter and Church. Several parents shared that their concern remains around cars on Carpenter. Erin asked if this was the new route or if this was just changed for COVID. Rebecca shared that she received feedback from parents that they liked the new route. Stephanie suggested advertising (ie, put it on the list serve with dates/times so that drivers have a heads up that their morning commutes may be impacted). It was mentioned that we used to have a banner and could we somehow make use of that banner again. Suggestion was made to have a separate scooter group, as scooters travel slower than bikes.

Spirit Wear- Lucy Rojansky

Spirit Wear sale was great! Total income rose almost \$900. Lucy is looking for a volunteer who will be in Pittsfield VT to pick up. Lucy is planning one distribution day, and she will send out e-mails with notices for people to pick up. She will send out a survey to see if there is interest in another Spirit Wear sale.

Room Rep Update - Rebecca Reed

Rebecca shared that all the room reps are filled. She described the challenges of getting e-mail addresses (getting consent from parents to be contacted by the PTO) and asked Mr. Gonyaw if we could include it in the registration. Mr Gonyaw said if the PTO sends the language that we would like included, then he will see if we can put it in the preregistration. We need to encourage more parents to give their e-mail addresses. Mr. Gonyaw volunteered to send out info to all families if needed.

Supplemental Food Program/Lost and Found - update given by Stephanie Hamilton

The supplemental food program and healthy snack choices is up and running. 4th grade classes will help collect lost items and put them in the lost and found. Things with labels will get back to your children (so label them!). Erin asked if she needed help, Stephanie wasn't sure, she will ask.

Stephanie inquired about next meeting- if anyone is interested in Zoom or would prefer a bonfire meeting. General consensus was for a bonfire meeting.

Giving Tree Discussion-

Stephanie gave a brief overview of Giving Tree: teachers request items for their classroom in December, a list is made, then room reps organize class parents and go purchase items from the list. There is generally confusion over if parents should donate towards the Giving Tree or do a personal teacher gift, and it lands in December when there are often many events/requests for donations. Rebecca, Molly and Stephanie talked this summer and are wondering if there is a better way to organize the program so that teachers didn't have to wait until December and parents weren't confused as to what The Giving Tree is. Stephanie sent out a request for feedback to teachers, but hasn't heard back (it was at the beginning of the school year). Mr. Gonyaw suggested asking again. Lucy Rojansky suggested giving money at the start of the school year, just giving everyone a certain amount of money- there would be no forms to fill out

and it would include special teachers who often get left out of Giving Tree. Only thing to complicate that solution is the budget- how would we fund giving everyone an equal amount at the start of the school year. Mr. Gonyaw suggested The Giving Tree has the potential to be unequal, because many staff members are unsure of how to use it (new staff members, for example). Gonyaw suggested that the PTO does not do too much soliciting for feedback/before making changes, because so many staff are new, that we have an opportunity to do something new. Stephanie sent out an email about PTO fall grants and has received very few grant applications. A parent suggested revisiting how we fill in teachers about grants - could Stephanie go to a staff meeting to explain? Mr. Gonyaw offered that Stephanie could come tomorrow to the in-service day anytime between 1-3, and Stephanie agreed. There was a brief discussion asking if we gave a set amount at the beginning of the year, do we need to ensure it goes toward supplies- would need to look into this more if this is the route we are considering going.

A question was asked about supplies-there were very few supplies to purchase, is this usual? Mr. Gonyaw explained supplies are included in the budget.

7:39 meeting adjourned.

NEXT MEETING: Thursday November 4th 7pm, Zoom