



Willard PTO Meeting

Monday, August 29th, 2022, 8:45am

In-Person, Willard MPR

1. Call to Order

Meeting was called to order by Anna at 08:49 Welcome back to our first in person PTO meeting in several years. Introduction of the board followed.

2. Report: Superintendent (Dr. Ed Condon)

Dr. Condon welcomed everyone and expressed his happiness to be back in person. He witnessed first hand the joy shown on the first day of school by our students and families. During this first meeting of the year, he'd like to share some goals of the district. Our Goals Include: High Quality Instruction, Safety and Security, Financial Stability, Diverse staff and environment. The 5 goals of the Strategic Plan were shared and can be found on the River Forest Dist 90 website. (Goal 1: Academic Success, Goal 2: Personal Well-Being, Goal 3: High Quality, Diverse Staff, Goal 4: Shared Responsibility, Goal 5: Equitable Opportunities and Resources.) One area we are looking at this year is the kindergarten program and how it can best meet the needs of families and provide high level instruction. To close, we are lucky as a district to be able to provide for our students academically but the PTO supplies the extra social aspect and the fun that makes the school a place the students are excited to be in.

3. Report: Principal (Diane Wood and Christine Gerges)

Big thank you to the staff at Willard for getting the building and instruction ready for the first day of school.

Town Halls (all-school assemblies) take place on Monday and we are hoping to return to in person assembly starting Monday! Diane runs the first few Town Halls but after that, individual classrooms take over leading each Town Hall. Diane shared a story where she discussed some chaotic behavior at the beginning of the school days during Town Hall and the students responded by changing their behavior and engaging in problem solving.

This week is Safety Week and we are preparing for multiple safety events that could happen: tornado, active shooter, fire. We practice being “swift and silent”. We have a partnership with the safety personnel in RF - police officers, firefighters, etc that is wonderful for the students to see. This is of high value to the school.

Benchmark assessments are coming up next week. This will take place during September. In October, grade level meetings take place as well as group planning for students. Each student is assessed and discussions are held on how to best serve the student.

Please read the Wizard Weekly, there is important information found there.

We are excited to have an in person Open House this year so families can see the school and where the students spend their day. This may be the first time some families have been in the school after the long pandemic years.

Q: How can we find out which words are being used during safety drills?

A: Speak to Diane. For example we use the words “lock down” not “active shooter”

Q: How is assessment information passed along to families?

A: Usually during conference time.

Q: When can we expect Membership Took Kit(family directory) to be updated?

A: A link and info will be sent out sometime in September.

4. Report: Presidents (Anna Parks and Megan Seliga)

This year is exciting because we get to put back in to place all the things that have been put on hold during the last 2 years. This is also a great time to assess each of these activities and whether they served the students and how they can be put back in to practice to the highest level.

One of the big items to put back on our list is fundraising to refill our bank account so we can continue to fund things like field trips.

Please contact Anna with any questions and feel free to ask her for her contact info so she can be contacted directly.

Please ask if you have any questions to avoid the frenzy surrounding misinformation. Diane also shared that she also is always available to answer questions.

Q: Where is the PTO calendar?

A: The link was in the first Wizard Weekly. We went digital this year so we could have more flexibility with scheduling. Please share that there are open PTO positions still available! Those will be shared forthcoming.

5. Report: Secretary (Erin Llanes)

Please email updates directly to me so I can cut and paste from email to minutes.

6. Report: Treasurer (Ursula Canli)

Report via Anna: Budget shows that items have gotten more expensive post pandemic so it is taking longer to get through the entire sheet. More detailed budget planning will be shared next meeting.

Anna will be reaching out to chairs to have short 15 min meetings with budgets, expectations, etc
Diane asked to please reach out to new social worker, Mr. Larkin on how much we are able to share with school for fee waiver student lunches for example. He would love to buy lunch boxes for students

to make these meals look more like home and to feel more delicious. Ginny is also working with Mr. Larkin on fee waived fun lunches.

A subcommittee is in the process of being formed to help deal with family need issues such as these and to provide admission to different events for those who may be in need. Diane suggested asking families to provide scholarships for the “family care fund” during events that have an admission fee or items with costs as we have done successfully in the past.

7. Report: Vice President of Volunteers (Rachel Dardis)

Working on SUG’s currently

8. Report: Vice Presidents of Technology (Virginia Sara)

Ginny is speaking individually to specific chairs about upcoming SUG and events.

9. Report: Vice President of Communications (Gretchen Radach, Hadley Lewno, Nikki

Kidd(website specialist) & Laura Riff) *Copied and pasted from email*

We are dividing and conquering with a team approach this year! Welcome Hadley Lewno and Laura Riff as they take on the Wizard Weekly this year! We are grateful for your time and energy. Also, a special thank you to Anna Parks who introduced us to Nikki Kidd. Nikki owns her own Website firm and will explore a much needed refresh of our Willard PTO Website as well as provide ongoing maintenance and updates this year. Thank you, Nikki! It’s been a busy few weeks! Here’s what our team is up to: Creating and sending the Wizard Weekly in Mailchimp on a weekly basis (Sunday at 6 pm), Creating and sending weekly content reminders to Chairs (Tuesday 7 am), Creating blast templates for the year, Updating the Wordpress Web Site (willard.district90pto.org) with new school year content such as new executive board and committee members, volunteer SUGs and other page updates as well as regular maintenance in terms of PTO meeting agendas and the weekly newsletter posting, Managing PTO Chairs and Community email lists on MailChimp, Creating how-to training videos and procedural documents for perpetuity. In addition, we gathered key information to share in the first newsletter such as the President’s letter, Principal’s letter, PTO calendar,

district calendar, Welcome Wagon information, Fun Lunch, 5K and Web Store offerings. We also connected with Spirit Wear, World Language, etc. to update content and prepare for future newsletters and Website content. We worked with Willard staff to get emails for new families to share the Wizard Weekly. Our first email had a 78% open rate! Thank you to Diane Wood and the PTO leadership for supporting the electronic newsletter delivery of our first communication in lieu of our standard summer mailer. Not only did it save us between \$500-600, it saved countless, precious summer hours going back and forth with the printer, picking up the order, postage, envelopes and and then manually stuffing and labeling and posting the mailer. The electronic version was time and cost efficient. We appreciate you!

Nikki is the new website coordinator! Welcome, Nikki! Please share with Nikki what information needs to be included on the PTO website that may not be present now. She is also looking into accessibility - for example, having translators or big bold type. Nikki is doing some comparisons to other school websites in the area to get ideas on how to make it easier to use and navigate. Anna is so happy to have a new perspective.

Comment: Signing up for milk is on the district website, which is hard to find. Same with fun lunch. So maybe easier to navigate links would be nice.

Laura introduced herself as another member of the communications team. Welcome Laura!

Reminders to provide content to the Wizard Weekly will be sent out via email on Tuesdays. Please have information to the team by Thursday, 5pm. Late submissions will be honored, it is just difficult for the team to go back and change the content. Even a place holder is helpful. Laura finished up with the report copied above.

10. Report: School Board Liaison (no rep at this time)

Katie Avalos was present so she introduced herself and thanked the PTO members for their time. Board meetings are in person but they are still zoomed as well as taped and posted so everyone can attend and stay up to date on district happenings.

11. Committee Reports

Please provide a brief update (no longer than five minutes) for the following committees:

Welcome Wagon Coffee

Jessica Rogers and Erin Dowdall volunteered their time and tents - went well and was well attended.

Back to School Picnic (Anna Parks)

Comments on how the new format was so laid back and fun. Everyone loved the Ravinia vibe and praised the planning and execution by Diane and Anna.

Fun Lunch (Courtney Skelton)

Courtney introduced herself. We are offering Jimmy John's, Buona Beef, and Jim and Pete's. Courtney is concerned that families may not understand that this is the only sign up for this semester and sign up is NOT weekly like it has been in previous years. Diane shared that Thursday is backpack day for fliers if we would like to send one home. She will also include a note in her email that is being sent out soon. Diane is also concerned that with the amount of emails going out this may be getting missed. Do we still want to do table side carrot delivery or should we have a buffet style lunch? Diane suggested buffet style and limiting sides to those who purchase fun lunch.

Q: Is there a way to do less ordering at a time? For example, 4 weeks vs a full semester.

A: We will look at the setup and perhaps do some tweaking going forward and have shorter time frames.

It was decided that sign up would be extended a week.

Ingrid Payne introduced herself and offered herself as coordinator. I can help as back up coordinator. This week is 11am and several PTO members offered to help out for this first Fun Lunch.

Spirit Wear/Community Fundraising (Meredith Maienza)

For Spirit Wear, there is a new website. Each item can be personalized and created to your preference. The items will be shipped directly to each family home. Meredith would like to send out a flyer to remind people to buy spirit wear.

Comment: Perhaps advertising and hyping up Spirit Wear on Fridays will encourage people to buy.

We were planning on Laffy Taffy apple fundraising in the fall. Diane said there can absolutely NOT be nuts or nut products on property. It may not be possible to do this fundraiser safely. There was a suggestion to have pick up at someone's house.

Maybe we can push paying PTO dues to help raise money. Diane suggested combining this with a raffle. A discussion was held on how to rebrand PTO dues and how to make it accessible to all families while still encouraging giving.

Diane wanted to point out the difference between activities that are held to raise funds and those that are held to build community. We should have a nice mix of both types of activities.

Are we able to have a food drive at the school? Yes absolutely we have had several food drives throughout the year in the past. Diane would prefer this not to be a competition but is happy to support the effort through the school. That being said, Diane wants to be cautious about how many fundraisers we host that do not benefit the school and that rely on families writing checks instead of being run by students and their efforts.

Upcoming fundraisers:

Wolves game

Yoga in the Park

Spring Scavenger Hunt

There was a suggestion to reinstate the Friendsgiving auction. Discussions are to be held.

Another suggestion to have a talent show fundraiser. There would need to be a lot of discussion and planning if this were to be a viable suggestion.

A big issue people have brought up regarding fundraising is transparency. Families would like to know how the money is being spent.

Willard 5K (Amber Kardosh)

Amber introduced herself. Brenna Brown is working on sponsorships and Emily has created the logo. We have raised a fair amount of money so far and are hoping for 200 registrants. There are 81 people signed up as of this date. A SUG will be going out for volunteers closer to the event.

Q: How should staff participate? Do they sign up or just show up?

A: This will be examined and shared.

Comment: It may be unclear that ALL can sign up, not just Willard students. Dawne offered to insert a short blurb in the District 90 weekly update, especially now that we know that it is open to the entire community.

Q: Where can we find trash cans, tables, etc

A: Custodians will have to be brought into the loop so there is someone present to be in charge of operations on school property.

A BIG thank you to Amber and the team for all of the hard work they have put into this activity.

There was a discussion held on how to reach more people in the community.

Library Art/Yearbook (Emily Brown, Megan Mackie, Jessica Rogers)

We have been having trouble with the printing of yearbooks for the last couple years. The 20-21 yearbook is still coming. Emily would love to have a finished 22-23 yearbook delivered to students by the end of the current year. There is some confusion bc there are orders coming in now for this year's yearbook even though last year's has not been delivered. We have an email just for pictures that are submitted by parents for yearbook purposes. Please be mindful that consent is needed and not all families would like their student's pictures to be shared on websites or in print.

Emily spoke to the library art that had been planned pre pandemic. This project is being relooked at and priced out at the current time. The new library will look amazing with new current wall art.

Green4Good (Lindsay McIntyre)

This year we'll be focusing around three main ideas: Promoting walk to school week (w/o Oct. 10th) by passing out t-shirt ties, doing some programming around Earth Week and offering to be a "green concierge" to teachers and room parents (helping support sustainable practices in the classroom). We'll also continue to support and partner with Roosevelt and Lincoln for their activities (pumpkin smash and bike exchange).

We paused the Halloween Costume Exchange because of COVID ... should we bring this back? Lindsay could also identify a charitable partner to donate leftover Halloween costumes to, if we organize this event.

The overwhelming response was that yes we should reinstate Costume Exchange.

Pancake Breakfast (Lindsay McIntyre)

The pancake breakfast has been scheduled for Saturday, Oct. 15th from 9-11:30 am. Joe, Andy and Trevor have an AWESOME committee formed and they met on Friday evening. The event will be pretty standard to years past, but they might need to find a new pancake sponsor since Grandma Sally's changed hands (they will be asking Yolk so keep your fingers crossed). A signup genius will go out closer to the event to recruit some additional dads to help on the day of. And since the Pancake Breakfast chair is married to the Green4Good chair we're going to brainstorm some ideas to make the event more environmentally friendly.

Student Pictures (Brenna Brown)

Copied from text: Picture Day Update: I emailed the picture day people and have not received a reply back yet but will follow up today. I am planning on being at Willard on picture

day and will make sure announcements go into the Wizard Weekly and on FaceBook group page.

Hero Boys (?)

Hero Boys does not yet have a chair so we will not currently be able to run this program.

A suggestion was made to have a link for all open chair positions on the new PTO website.

Diane suggested having a table at Open House for Spirit Wear info and also for sign ups.

12. Old News

13. New Business

World Languages - is Lincoln holding this program? Diane thinks no. Anna is wondering if there is parent interest in this program and how we can pilot the program going forward this year. This program is completely run by the PTO and is not a school run program.

14. Public Comment

Is our Belongingness and Inclusion committee District supported? Diane answered that yes each school's committee supports the work of the District and works within the larger District framework. Diane provided the history of the B&I committee and how they work within the district. The district committee is called the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee.

15. Adjournment

10:45

*** Next meeting October 3rd, 8:45am ***

