

**Walt Whitman PTA Meeting Minutes**  
**April 8, 2021**

**Meeting called to order and minutes from March meeting approved.**

**Treasurer's Report:** Revised budget presented. Notable changes include increased money for staff recognition and removed allocations for events that did not happen.

**Correspondence:** We received a thank you note from Walt Whitman staff for a great year of arts in education programming.

**Presidents Report:**

Happy Spring everyone!! Hope you are all enjoying the beautiful weather!

The past month has been very busy and we need to start off by giving a huge thanks to Mollie Newman and Lucille Polidoro and the entire PARP committee for taking on a whole month of PARP as well as our resident veterinarians, Dr. Julia Harmon and Dr. Barbara Krilov, for hosting a super fun and informative animal awareness night. All in all, it was a huge reading safari success. We also have to say that we have the most incredible staff and administration who took time out of their evenings to participate in our PARP BINGO and weekly bedtime stories. The turnout for the events was amazing thanks to our special staff! We are the luckiest community to have these individuals as role models for our children.

Last night was our 1st virtual talent show and it was a huge success! A big thank you to Lauren Cremer and Barbara Krilov for their hard work in making this happen. It was not easy to pull off and involved lots of technology so we really appreciate your efforts. Also, a big thank you to our very talented students and families for participating and also to those who just came to watch and support -It was so much fun! We hope everyone had a great night!

We are happy to announce that the 2021/2022 5th Grade Committee Members are:

Melanie Eisenberg  
Lauren Grams  
Tracey Trivax  
Marina Meyerowitz  
Mollie Newman  
Jen Pincus  
Gabby Platz  
Michelle Riedel  
Sheetal Rishi  
Janine Rubendall  
Sandi Werfel  
Leslie Won

Congratulations to all! This committee will work together to plan all of the special events for our fifth graders next year!!

## Budget Vote

At this meeting, we need to take a vote on whether to support the 2021-22 school district budget that keeps all curriculum and co-curricular programs in place. The budget information is on the district website. (Zoom vote)

Walt Whitman PTA votes to support the proposed School Board Budget for 2021/22, we will report our unit's support at the next Council meeting.

We have formed our awards committee. Thank you to Melissa Forman, Cindy Ho, Dana Kuropatkin, Dana Kralstein, Janine Rubendall and Tobi Wechsler for taking this on - we know it's a lot of work so we really appreciate your help. Look out for an email soon to nominate a deserving PTA member for an award.

Also, we will be having a big sale on our discount cards that are left! Starting next week, they will be \$10 each so buy for family & friends. They are available to purchase on our website.

As a reminder, we are still looking for a tech savvy parent to help assist with the management of our website and possibly with sending email blasts. If you or someone you know of in the school is familiar with Wordpress or another website hosting platform please reach out to us. This is a very easy way to be more involved with the PTA without too much of a time commitment and even a role that can be done easily by a working parent. Thank you in advance for considering helping with this important role!

Please remember to check our website, emails and read the weekly newsletters to find out information. As always, please feel free to reach out to either one of us if you have any questions.

## **Mr. Snyder's Report:**

-ELA and math assessments coming up for Grades 3-5. Although NYS applied for a waiver the federal government denied it. The state has reduced to assessments to only 1 day each, and they will be mostly multiple choice. 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade ELA will be about 60-75 minutes. 5<sup>th</sup> grade ELA will be a bit longer, 80-90 minutes.

-The exams will both be on paper.

-There is no assessments for virtual children. You do not need to send a letter to opt out your virtual child.

-If you do not want your child to take the test, please send a picture or a PDF with your signature on a letter stating that your child is opting out of which exams.

-We are planning spring events for outside, including 5<sup>th</sup> grade graduation, Field Day, Fun Fair, and kindergarten screening/orientation. There will be more information sent home when it's ready.

## **Arts in Ed:**

GO GREEN RECYCLED ROBOTS! During a live virtual art session, artist-author Joyce Raimondo will demonstrate how you can create your own-one-of-kind robot figure using 100% recycled items. Get inspired as Joyce shows you recycled masterpieces by Picasso and other great artists. Build your own robot, and share what you have made. SUPPLIES NEEDED: Suggestions: Collect one small box such as a tissue box and one larger box such as a cereal box, two - four cardboard rolls. Optional: one small water bottle. Collect assorted papers and small recycled items you can easily attach with glue

such as foam, ribbon, pom-poms, stickers. Glue and tape needed. Do not bring milk cartons or waxed boxes, any product with food, or large items.

### **Board of Ed Report:**

#### March BOE Meeting:

Josh Lafazan's proposal for the Stillwell Fields: announced a proposal to transfer the cleared portion of Stillwell Park to the school district from Nassau County, and for the County and District to jointly fund an improvement project to develop the property into a better athletic facility for our students and an enhanced recreational asset for our community with added amenities and increased security.

- Stillwell: Property will be transferred for a dollar, money pledge from the county and an investment from the school district. Renderings were presented.
- Existing sports teams who have use of the current Stillwell team- arrangements for the agreement- all sports groups that have standing use permits will transfer with the property

Budget for the communities consideration with our hoped future but also prepare for other possibilities

- o Budget will be built with both our best case scenario and worst case scenario. This will confirm that our district is prepared for all outcomes based on many different landscapes.

#### Superintendent's report:

- New Quarantine rules- questions- people who are fully vaccinated are considered those two weeks out of the second dose of their vaccine or first of JJ. Unknown if the vaccine is still potent after 90 days. This means those who are exposed do not need to quarantine who are fully vaccinated. Governor made an announcement as of April 1st, you will not need to quarantine for domestic travel but highly recommends if you are not vaccinated you should still quarantine and test. Internationally you will still need to follow quarantine policy.
- Discussion on the communities drop in percentage in positivity rate after February break and now it is back on the rise. Two hypotheses are: (1) people are taking more risks than before and (1) variants are much easier to transmit.
- Discusses how they determine a close contact: "Close contacts" are defined as being closer than 6 feet for 10 minutes, even with masks
- Syosset SD as a whole is very hard to compare to other districts and what they are doing based on our population size to the square footage of our space per child
- Discussion on 3ft apart from students vs 6 ft apart from students. Not enough data to determine if it is safe. If desks are 3ft apart this creates more students to quarantine vs the 6ft apart. We are waiting on guidance from the CDC.

#### Audience to the public:

Parent- Discussing districts that began to return their seniors for an all in full person model. Requesting the district to at least to just start with the seniors so they get their last experience. Speaking about Mental health and needs to be taken into consideration as well.

Parent- Requesting to do better for the seniors and let them come in everyday. Asking to put away the data and go with your gut and let them come in live in person.

Parent- Question about commencement. Any discussion to possibly do it outdoors? Is

there any discussion of what makes up the positivity rate? What plays a role in what can bring the kids back

Parent- Mentioning schools districts who have been open 5 days a week and which have now begun a full return this coming month.

Parent- Came tonight to ask a question about the virtual cohort- many of the students in the middle school cohorts. Are many who have medical conditions. Virtual cohorts have a distinct difference, example: virtual classroom has no co-pilot where in person has co-pilot. At the college level if you go virtual the classroom should actually go smaller. What are you looking at going forward for the virtual students to help the middle school students catch up?

Parent- New development- best western is going to turn into a retail establishment have you looked into this?. Related to quarantine guidelines- remind parents about the policy. Procedure and processes students who might not be following covid restrictions, students dropping masks, getting in other students' spaces. What is the policy to enforce warning before students end up bringing it home to their families?

Rogers Response:

-We all want the same thing and we all want the students to be back. What are the consequences of those risks? Being conservative because he has the responsibility of someone else's children's' life. Our school physician is required to screen any youngster who has had covid before we allow them to do any physical activity or sports because we are seeing instances of heart damage from cardiomyopathy from covid- so it does have an effect on children. Studies released on the Multisystem inflammatory syndrome. This happens 6 weeks after having covid. Apparent recovery followed by a dramatic disease.

-3ft vs 6ft discussion- increases the odds of someone sick in the room, NYT has a video of what the air currents looks like and watching this video could be eye opening.

-Virtual Students- Students showing difficulty- taking a student adaptive test- computer figures out what level you are at and to see if they are making the same rate of progress as pre-pandemic. We want to help the students who are not making progress. He agrees the virtual is not as strong as the in person but they are digging into the data. They have additional extra help in place. They are starting to budget in for extra help over the summer time.

-He is thankful for hearing about the new development of the best western.

-All principals have the three level strategy - masks, barriers, distance, if a student Doesn't comply repeatedly, no masking or poking neighbor it is violation of the code of conduct. The Principal has the tools they need and will have hard conversations with the parents if they need and go up a tier process. It is the Principal's responsibility.

Second Audience Public:

Parent- request to poll the families and poll the seniors to see if the numbers can work so the students who want to be in will get that chance.

Parent- If we are sticking with the data can we keep the other three grades home so the seniors get the chance to be in everyday for their last year.

Student- Anything they can do to get the seniors back would be appreciated.

Parent- Look at outdoors as an option for seniors to come together for events.

Student- Creating strategy to help the BOE come up with ideas to help have a prom.

Talking about State guidance vs. Research. Maximizing state restrictions.

BOE Special Meeting – Authorization of a Proposition – Stillwell Woods Preserve  
March 24, 2021

1. Extend voting in May election by 1 hr to respect community members who celebrate SEQRA
2. Authorization for a Proposition that allows Nassau County to convey property to school district & allows district to renovate the park
  - a. 35 acres of cleared land to SCSD; 60 acres that are wooded remain part of Nassau County
  - b. Conveyance for \$1
  - c. Subsequent improvement of property – needs renovation
    - i. Legislator Lafazan secured \$3 million for renovation but it was placed on hold due to pandemic; County will convey that to the District and match it w/ \$2 million by 2 diff developers w/ an addtl \$5 million to be raised by bond by SCSD. There is a bond becoming retired soon; net difference will be less than amount being retired.
  - d. Conditions:
    - i. All existing uses and agmts for permits convey & transfer w/ the property
    - ii. Nassau County residents can continue to use
  - e. Process – 3 steps:
    - i. School district – board must approve to put on May ballot
      1. Sale for \$1
      2. Raise funds for improvements
      3. Both must be passed; if either fails, both fail
    - ii. County – must be passed by legislature, earliest is 4/29
    - iii. NYS – must pass
  - f. SCSD shelved ideas to put in an internal structure; will continue to develop the outdoor space
  - g. Anticipating for project
    - i. 2 fields w/ lights – at least 1 grass field, 1 asphalt track
    - ii. Need to improve parking, asphalt & configuration
    - iii. Bathrooms need rehabilitation
    - iv. Infields of baseball fields have inadequate drainage
    - v. Look into ways to maximize use of property

Audience to Public

1. Audience – deeply concerned that out district’s taxpayers will finance for the upkeep of this property that will benefit the whole county. Why are we taking on this responsibility? It is an unnec burden on the school district & our taxpayers
2. Audience –1600+ children use this field; will like to see some type of visualization of the plans.
3. Audience –what is the ongoing budget to pay for this going forward, how will it impact the education tax

Rogers:

- With bubbles - \$300k, w/out bubbles - \$200k
- Syo rents athletic fields b/c we only have 1 right now & buses students – which it will not have to do anymore so there is savings there

Frankel:

- We’ve lagged behind other districts in terms of labs, walls parking, we’ve been slowly making this district what it should be, we need athletic fields & facilities that match, which will also enhance the sense of community

DiPhilippo:

Does not see an educational benefit, sees it as beneficial to some key users b/c Nassau County does not want to do the maintenance; would consider the project better if he saw more people's input.

Superintendent's Email

Stillwell Fields

We will be holding a series of community engagement meetings to provide further information on the propositions and gather feedback in the upcoming weeks. The meetings will be held at South Woods Middle School beginning at 7 p.m. on the following dates:

Wednesday, April 14, 2021

Tuesday, April 27, 2021

Tuesday, May 4, 2021

In order to allow for appropriate social distance at the meetings, the number of people in attendance will need to be limited. The meetings will be live streamed for anyone not able to attend in person. To register to attend one of the meetings in person, please click on a date above.

**Directory:** Access to the directory is for paid PTA members for 2020-21 school year only. Contact Dana Kralstein at [dana.kralstein@gmail.com](mailto:dana.kralstein@gmail.com) if you joined the PTA and are unable to access the directory. Also contact Dana if you have changes or additions or siblings to update.

**Fifth Grade Committee:**

There was a meeting last night with the other elementary schools and the council president. The meeting did not give us any guidance as to what events we can have at this time. The meeting was all the schools getting questions together for the Council President to bring back to the administration to get answers. She did however say that the administration is waiting as long as they can to give guidelines due to the fact that the NY State guidelines keep changing for the better. At this point she doesn't know when they will have the answers.

As far as graduation is concerned that has nothing to do with the PTA that is a district event. The PTA does help in decorating or having snacks after but has no say in the dates or how the event will play out.

The 5th grade committee will be having a zoom meeting next week to see what we can come up with as far as fun things to do with our 5th graders.

For the first time at Walt Whitman, we are providing an opportunity for your child to reproduce their artwork on a beautiful ceramic tile which will be displayed at the school on a "Legacy Wall."

Mrs. Beach has been working with the students on this amazing project. We ask that each family contribute \$30 as a 5th grade fundraiser and to cover the cost of the tile.

Payments can be made by clicking the link below.

<https://waltwhitmanpta.memberhub.store/store/items/712626>

All 5th graders should have received their tshirts and sweatshirts by now. Thanks again to Tara and Lauren - they came out great! Please make sure you put them in a safe place as the children will be wearing them for a group picture day sometime soon!

**Staff Recognition:**

Hi Everyone. The Staff Recognition committee will be working on an event for May for the Walt Whitman Staff Luncheon. It will be a different kind of event this year due to the circumstances but will be just as good if not better than previous years. Thank you for the budget increase so that we can give thanks to our incredible teachers and staff. We will provide the final outline at the next PTA meeting. For those members who have previously signed up – we will be holding a meeting at the end of next week or early on the following week. Thanks so much!

**Upcoming Dates:**

4/9	WW Spirit Day
4/20	Budget & BOE Mtg, 8pm
4/23	WW Spirit Day
4/28	SEPTA General Meeting, 7:45pm
5/3	Zoom PTA Mtg, 7:30pm

**PTA Meeting Times:**

Monday, May 3rd at **7:30pm** & Wednesday, June 9th at **7:30 pm**

**Spirit Dates:**

Friday, April 9th- Friday, April 23rd- Friday, May 7th- Friday, May 21st- Friday, June 4th- Friday, June 18<sup>th</sup> – Friday, June 25th