



General Meeting Minutes

November 13, 2024, at 7:30pm | Walt Whitman Elementary School

Our meeting was called to order at 7:33 pm with a quorum present. Attendance was taken by sign in sheet.

I. Approve minutes - October 2024

We sent out the minutes from our last PTA meeting for review via email and have some copies on the tables today. Does anyone have comments, changes, or questions? If not, the minutes stand as approved. Thank you.

II. Treasurer’s Report – Allison Soren

Opening Balance, 9/23/24	\$ 71,723.68
Income/Deposits	\$ 10,255.91
Expense/Cash Disbursements	\$ 17,145.83
<u>Checking Balance 10/22/24</u>	<u>\$ 64,834.26</u>
<u>CD Balance as of 9/22/24</u>	<u>\$ 35,000.00</u>
<u>TOTAL Cash on Hand as of 10/22/24</u>	<u>\$ 99,834.26</u>

“All balances were reconciled to the bank statements. The books were reviewed and found to be in order by Sunita Hansraj. Thank you Sunita.”

III. Correspondence Secretary – read by Niki Gionis - None

IV. Principal’s Report – Mr. Snyder

Bullying Presentation - At the October Board meeting it was recommended that the principals share the bullying presentation with their schools. We’ll go through some highlights tonight but the full presentation can be found on the district website.

We held our annual Chalk the Walk today where the students wrote messages of kindness and encouragement on the sidewalks outside of the school. We also kicked off a kindness initiative where we recognize acts of kindness. Once identified they may be written down and hung up around the school or read out loud during announcements. Our goal is to build a kindness chain that wraps around the building, a goal generated from ideas from last year’s student council.

There have been questions about resolving student disputes. Myself, Dr. Responti and Dr. Imbrogno are often observing the students during lunch and recess, helping with conflict resolution. There is video (no audio) on the playground and recess area. There is audio on the buses however since the buses are run by an independent company it may take several days to get access to the tapes.

There are DASA federal requirements to be adhered to in the event of a code of conduct violation. Parents can go through the school or submit a DASA form to open an investigation on their own. Once this happens, Ms Nupp and Levian are the faculty committee members who will investigate the claim. Investigations are kept confidential as much as possible given the nature of the claim and how may parties need to be involved in the investigation. Once a case is opened it cannot be dismissed. Records



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must be retained by law for 27 years. Incidents will be recorded on “infinite campus” which can be accessed by other administrators only. Violations will also be documented by the state however names are not included. If a parent does not want to open a DASA complaint, they should speak to myself or the classroom teacher, however, I may recommend DASA if I have identified a violation. Repercussions could include suspension There have been very few out of school suspension in my tenure at WW. There have been more in school suspension where I personally supervise the students.

V. President’s Report - read by Karen Ostrick & Cindy Ho

It’s hard to believe we’re already halfway through November! October was packed with outstanding events, and we couldn’t have achieved such success without the energy, commitment, and hard work of our incredible PTA parents and everyone who participated. Tonight, we want to take a moment to highlight our amazing executive board and express our heartfelt gratitude for everything they do. Their dedication, creativity, and leadership have made a significant difference in our school community, and we are so thankful for their unwavering support and efforts. To all the parents who contribute their time, ideas, and enthusiasm—your efforts inspire and uplift us all. Thank you for being an essential part of our PTA family!

So, with that being said, we kicked off the Wolverine Kingdom with our incredible Book Fair—thank you to Erica Schulman, Sam Lebenhart, and Patrice Gooden, along with their VP Trupti Bahl, for all your hard work running the book fair and of course getting the books delivered to the kids that were ordered! Then, we wrapped up our PARP program at the end of October, with special thanks to our chairs—Mollie Newman, Rachel Levenson, Heather Egart, and VP Erica Schulman. Our Pajama Night, themed dress-up days, and mystery readers were a hit, and the kids loved every bit of it! We hope you or a special reading partner joined your child in celebrating the joy of reading. A big shout-out to Mr. Snyder and teachers Ms. Rigert, Ms. Mackey, and Ms. Libertelli along with some special 5th grade students who helped us read that night and inspire the children. Our Fall Festival closed out the month with incredible fun! Huge thanks to Ioana Calka, Jessica Kotkin, Hera Bokhari, Jackelinne Stadler, and VP Tara Bensol for their months of planning and creativity. The kids had a blast with mummy-wrapping, pumpkin pickleball, pumpkin decorating, and, of course, our unforgettable dancing parties!

We would also like to say thank you to Niki Gionis, Heather Egert and VP Tara Bensol for an incredible Family Fun Night at Bounce Syosset last night! Your hard work made the night an absolute hit, full of excitement, laughter, and joy on all the kids' faces. This event is always a favorite, and last night was no exception. We’re so appreciative of your dedication and can’t wait for the next fun-filled family evening!

Tonight, we’ll be voting on our Nominations Committee members. Our bylaws require three members from our Executive Board, two from our general membership, and one alternate. We’ve already voted on the Executive Board members and the alternate at our executive board meeting this evening. Friendly reminder - you must be a current member to vote - please check the membership list to ensure you are able to vote this evening.



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Looking ahead, November promises to be just as eventful! We have some wonderful fundraisers, like our White Post Farms Pie Sale, Discount Card and lets not forget the Walt Whitman Towels - we still have some left for sale. These fundraising efforts help support activities like our Maker Space Recess activities, family fun nights, and the Thanksgiving crafts for the senior luncheon. Speaking of the luncheon, it is a beautiful way to teach our kids about giving back, as they bring joy to local seniors who are in nursing homes as well as sharing the warmth of “community” with them. We’re also in the middle of our annual Coat Drive, and you’ll hear more soon from our Community Kindness Committee. Thank you for helping make Whitman such a caring, engaged community!

I also want to mention an important update about dues. Due to an increase in National PTA dues, which in turn increased NYS dues, we’ll be adjusting our membership dues that are submitted to NYS starting in January. We’ll hold a vote on the new dues amount at our next meeting, so please join us then to share your input. A quick note about membership: a family membership covers two adults only. If other family members would like to attend events and join the PTA, they’ll need to register separately. We’d love to have everyone involved!

Before we go into our standing committee reports, I’d like to touch on our sign-up process briefly. We understand it’s challenging to meet everyone’s preferences, and we’ve tried various approaches over the years. Some events naturally draw more interest, while others don’t as much. We’re thrilled to offer so many opportunities for everyone to participate and connect with our school community, and we only ask that you kindly follow a few simple guidelines.

First, these sign-ups are essential for providing security with the information they need to keep our children safe. If you’re unable to attend after signing up, please cancel directly through the sign-up form. If the form has already closed (at midnight the night before the event), please email the chairs so we can manually adjust it, so... do not give your spot to anyone else - as they will not be on our security list for access to the building. Lastly, as you know, we work hard to keep everything running smoothly for the kids, so we can’t adjust the list on the day of the event, and please contact us if you have any questions regarding any sign ups so we can help.

Thank you so much for your cooperation and support in making our events a success!

VI. Standing Committee Reports

- A. We will hear the report of the **Arts in Education / Curriculum Enrichment** committee given by Erica Schulman or Heather Egert.

Since we last met our kids have enjoyed two fabulous assemblies. In October they enjoyed the Kindness Quest which was a laser show that focused on the qualities of kindness. Last week our students had the privilege of listening to LuAnn Adams, an engaging storyteller who used props and artifacts to bring Native American folktales to life. Next month our students will have the Circus residency come to our school.

- B. Now we will hear the report of the **Board of Education Reporter** given by Daneille Sandjaby or Heather Egert.

At the **November 4th Board of Education meeting**, They spoke about changes to the code of conduct. Some examples of changes to the language was the change from free speech to protected



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speech. They have been advised to use more precise language in revisions to the code of conduct. They are starting to take recommendations from the anti bias task force in their revisions.

The superintendent's report included talks about the mascot selection process. We have to pick a new mascot and they want it to be a community driven process. This winter 2024 they are forming a committee with no limit, composed of students, alumni, parents, faculty, staff and residents. The committee will meet and prepare a survey for the community.

A big topic at the meeting was when the Board discussed the New York State Education Department *Regionalization plans*. Dr Rogers gave a thorough presentation about those plans and tried his best to explain what these plans really mean for Syosset. There is a link to this presentation from the board meeting if you have any questions or concerns about this. In my opinion Dr Rogers gave a great explanation about it.

[November 4th Superintendent report](#)

The concern is that these efforts might diminish local control or negatively impact our students' opportunities. NYSED has clarified in writing that any cooperative efforts are strictly voluntary and we will not be required to share our resources with other districts. Dr Rogers wanted to reassure members of the community: the Syosset Central School District will oppose any threat to local control and any attempt to redirect our community's resources. The Board of Education agreed to send a letter to NYSED, this letter was composed and sent last week, it outlined our position and politely, but firmly detailed recommendations for changes that must be incorporated before the Regents vote on any permanent regulations in January. If NYSED's amendments inadequately address our concerns, they claim to be prepared to follow up appropriately and vigorously. At the Board meeting they gave a presentation on Foundation Aid – funds in the State budget that help pay for our local schools – and concerns that the State might redesign that funding stream in ways that might erode our support from the State. Foundation aid was fully funded by the Governor in 2023/24 but in 2024/25 Syosset's aid was cut \$200,000 by about 1%. The Governor signals intent to propose even more cuts in 2025. The budget proposal will be released at the end of January 2025. Dr Rogers states we should be earning more aid because Syosset's increase in student population which was more than 10% since 2016, The most in Nassau county. English new learners have doubled since 2016 and our wealth factor has decreased. Dr Rogers recommendation is that we send a letter to the Governor. ***While Regionalization has gotten a lot of attention, Foundation Aid changes could be far more impactful for Syosset and are more immediate and concerning. They said they will keep the district updated on developments.***

OCT 2024 BOE MEETING -There was a great presentation given by our very own principal, as well as 2 other principals at the elementary level. Then middle and high school gave presentations on bullying. This was a very informative and interesting way to see how bullying is handled across all 3 levels of education and how Syosset handles it. The presentation is online and I highly encourage everyone to watch it.

- There was a presentation on the anti bias task force which talked about the student experience, code of conduct, how the curriculum goals are progressing, professional developments taking place and the community partnership.



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- Dr. Rodgers talked about how grateful he was for passing the bond. He was impressed with the community and while he knows it will be a lot of work, it will be worth it for the students. He will keep the public informed as the projects that need to be attended to mostly will happen first.
- The board is moving forward with adopting a new mascot.

C. We will now hear the report of the **BoxTops** given by Erika Auerbach.

The Box Tops Fundraiser is the easiest way to raise money for the school! Simply download the app, scan your receipts or if you buy online, forward them to the email address provided! Hi! We are currently at \$65.70 with our goal of \$100. We will change our goal to \$200 after we reach our goal. Thank you for all your support! So many products you buy are included, it is easy! Please keep scanning your receipts or hand them to me!

D. Now we will hear the report of the **Community Kindness committee** given by Tracy Brown and/or Joanne Fang

Our coat drive is underway and will be run through the end of November. Please donate your kids' outgrown coats, or any gently used and clean coats in the box in the vestibule. Please be sure all used coats have been cleaned. We are also accepting new hats, scarves and gloves. Clothing donations can also be made to the nurse's office for spare clothes in the event of an emergency. Stay tuned for the toy drive starting December. Thanks in advance and contact Joanne Fang or myself with any questions.

E. Now we will hear the report of the **Fifth Grade Committee** given by Pam Bahiri and Inna Choi -

Thank you to everyone that participated in the popcorn fundraiser! It was a tremendous success!! And thank you to everyone who ordered chrome book decals as well as Syosset spirit wear! Everyone should have received their decals by now and we will let you know when the spirit wear comes in! We truly appreciate all of your support! Please be on the lookout for our candy bouquets flyer which will be sold for pickup at the winter concert. We are very excited for our 5th grade Knicks night this Sunday. 5th grade families that are attending, please be on the lookout for your email with your tickets and more information!

Tracy Brown will speak on behalf of the **Fifth Grade Yearbook Committee** now - 5th grade parents, please make sure you have submitted your child's baby picture and strike a pose photo, otherwise, they will not be included in the yearbook. Information about yearbook boosters will also be coming soon so please make sure you check your emails and always feel free to reach out if you have any questions. We do not need any other pictures at this time. Thank you to everyone that has submitted.

F. The **Holiday Boutique committee** we be reported on by Neha Sharma, Lauren Grams, and Erica Sutter

Holiday Boutique will be on 12/3 and 12/4 for those kids absent or forgot money. This is a cute event where your kids can shop for their loved ones. We will be sending home an envelope that will have space for you to list out people you would like your child to buy for and a budget. Please send cash or check. There will be no religious items for sale. Sign ups for parent volunteers to help the kids shop was sent out Monday. Please let me, Erica Sutter or Neha Sharma know if you have any questions. Checks can be made out to the Walt Whitman PTA or Credit Cards Accepted for parent volunteers.



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In response to a parent question, presidents responded that the decision to not include religious items for sale is made by the PTA which is a non-secular organization. Each PTA is responsible for determining if religious items will be included for sale for their schools. This is not a district wide decision.

- G. We will now here the **Maker Space Recess committee report** which will be given by Sunita Hansraj, Valerie Kesten and Stella Wei

Our Maker Space Program (formerly Brown Bag committee) is off to a great start! Students have enjoyed completing various craft and STEAM related projects during recess periods across a month. Our goal is to continue to provide additional activities for students to engage in during recess periods throughout each month. Thank you to everyone who has already volunteered! We are always looking for volunteers to help out, as well as ideas for future Maker Space sessions. Please feel free to reach out via email or through the form in the weekly newsletter.

- H. Trupti Bahl, Jenn Crecco, Booke Kneller and Gabby Platz, from the **Multicultural Committee** will report now

The International Day and Multicultural Expo Committee has been working on our annual event. Turns out this year's annual event will in fact, be two events. First, a traditional International Day where our students will travel from country to country learning interesting facts along the way. Our committee is still in the planning stage, but the basic format remains the same. Participating parents will construct a trifold poster board about the country they are presenting; this presentation should be geared towards a kindergarten age audience. Also parents considering volunteering for this day will need to set aside the entire day. There will be an opportunity for parents who can only come for an hour or so to be flight attendants; ushering the students from country to country. Second: Our second portion is an international food exposé. Volunteers will supply food from their country of choice please note this food should be hors d'oeuvre style and/or easy to eat while standing up. There will also be a fashion portion for this night, where our students will participate in a fashion show or perform an act of their choice. This is completely optional. Both events are going to be great. We will give you more detailed information at our next PTA meeting.

- I. The **Parents Night out Committee** will report now - Niki Gionis, Ioana Calka, and Jackie Avellino

We've been hard at work planning and are beyond excited for this year's Parents' Night Out (PNO)! Mark your calendars for **February 6th from 7:45–9:45 PM at The Granola Bar**. It's going to be a fantastic evening filled with great food, drinks, and an amazing performance by the illusionist TJ Tana. Now's the perfect time to arrange childcare and reach out to family or friends who might be willing to contribute raffle donations. If you have something to donate, or if you'd like to help us gather raffle items, we'd love to have you join our committee! This event is not only going to be a fun night out, but it will also help raise essential funds for our school and our kids. We can't wait to see you there!

- J. Here is a report of the **Pie Sale Committee** given by Adrienne Krueger, Erica Schulman and Yuko Bhatia



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Thank you to everyone who supported our school's Pie Sale fundraiser this year! We had a great turn out for pie sale orders. Orders have been placed to White Post Farms and will be ready for distribution at dismissal on Tuesday, 11/26 at dismissal. We will send reminders about when to pick up your pies as we get closer to the date.

- K. Now we will hear the report of the **School Store committee** given by Heather Egert and Carlie Laffie

We will be allowing parents to sign up more than 1x for their students. Makerspace also allows parents to be there during recess for activities. Please go to the sign up form to see what is available. Shout out to the 4th grade parents - *please sign up*.

- L. Which leads us to the report from the **Spirit Wear Committee** given by Sydnie Monchik and Ashley Feig

The spirit wear fundraiser was successful, 154 people placed orders and most were for multiple items. Which not including hats and magnets we had at the welcome back picnic and K playdate. We are waiting for some final invoices but we roughly profited around \$3500k.

We had the 5th grade fundraiser that came after and that one did fairly well, I think we should reopen and publicize it in the spring as I think people will be very interested and it has a lot of life to it.

- M. Another important report from **SEPTA** given by Danielle Sandjaby

SEPTA is a district wide PTA whose primary role is to promote acceptance and inclusion of all by providing resources and support to parents, teachers and children who receive special education services through an IEP, 504 Plan, related support services such as resource room, counseling, speech, occupational or physical therapy and students who are twice exceptional or gifted. Our main source of fundraising is our membership drive, so please join! Also back by popular demand is our membership discount card, which is free with every membership. This card gives discounts at local stores such as Ask Alice, Fratonis, Sandwich Express and much more! <https://syossetsepta.memberhub.com/store> We had our second meeting of the year on Tuesday, October 22nd at Berry Hill that focused on the types of technology and tools available to assist our students achieve their absolute best. The presentation can be found on the district website. Please join us at our next Septa meeting on November 20th, at 7:45 pm at South Grove Elementary School. This month's presentation is on Social skills. We are looking forward to the 2nd annual Resource fair on December 3rd, 2024 from 7:30-9:00 at H.B. Thompson Middle School. Parents and children are invited to attend. Some of our vendors will be providing activities to engage the kids. We already have lots of great vendors attending such as occupational therapists and representatives from Northwell Health.

- N. The report of the **Thanksgiving Luncheon Committee** will be presented by Gunika Singh, Sabina Chaikin, Theresa Seedorf and Ashley Cohen

Thank you to all the parents who helped with the Thanksgiving crafts last week and this week! This memorable event will be held on Tuesday, Nov 19th. The committee is fast at work inviting guests, planning the crafts that will be gifted to our senior guests and those that will transform the gym into a fabulous fall backdrop for the day. A sign up for food and gift card donations has gone out. Please consider donating if you have not already. Donations from local vendors continue to come in as well.



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Families of 5th graders, your children get to be a big part of this special event. 5th grade students will be invited to BYOL (bring your own lunch) and eat and socialize with our guests. In addition there will be musical performances as well as the Kindergarten parade. The committee is requesting a budget increase of \$300 (from \$500 to \$800) to cover the cost of food that has not been donated as well as additional crafts for takeaways for the guests. With no opposition, the budget increase is approved. If you have any questions feel free to reach out to the committee chairs Ashley Cohen, Sabina Chaikin, Theresa Seedorf, Gunika Singh, or - Thank you.

O. Now we will hear **Syosset Council of PTAs Committee reports.**

1. We will now hear a report from the **Reflections** given by Erica Shulman.

Reflections had outstanding participation this year from our school. Whitman had a record breaking **27 submissions!** The entries are off to the first round of judging. Thank you to everyone who participated!

2. The **Parent Resource committee** report will be given by Jenn Crecco. -

The Parent Resource Group will be hosting an evening with Eric Hussin. Eric is a motivational speaker who talks about mental health and wellness from his own personal experience. His career was on the rise when a debilitating mental health crisis stopped him in his tracks. After years of failed treatment, he began his journey to wellness and became determined to share his story of challenges and triumphs. In an effort to help others, he launched a nonprofit #SameHereGlobalMentalHealth Movement. It is comprised of athletes, celebrities, expert practitioners, advocates and everyday heroes who've come together to normalize society's perception of mental health. Please join us for his powerful presentation that will leave you encouraged and empowered! Feel free to check out his website for more information <https://samehereglobal.org>. This virtual presentation will be November 25 at 7:30 pm. Registration is required by 11/22.

3. **Health, Nutrition and Safety** report from Lauren Grams -

The HNS committee recently participated in the SHS wellness fair. The committee gave away SPF 15 chapstick, single serve electrolyte packets and offered participants colored notecards and envelopes to write their own positive message, affirmation or mantra to give themselves or to give to someone else. The committee has also created and distributed a Fall wellness flyer including healthy tips for the season.

VII. Special Visit: A BOE trustee was present at the meeting as a PTA member, Jack Ostrick, and answered a few questions about the recent regionalization plan. While individual Trustees cannot respond on behalf of the BOE, they can answer based on their personal opinions; they are always available and try to answer questions to the best of their ability. General feedback from the PTA members was that the district should not have taken so long to publicly respond, especially when other districts were doing so. The BOE Trustee acknowledged a lot of uncertainty within the district and said the district would try to help to keep people informed so as to minimize some misinformation that was out there. The timing of making an announcement to the community was dependent on factors such as



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when the Board was able to meet to discuss it. Mr. Ostrick pointed to the letter the BOE had sent to the NYS Ed Department that showed that the BOE was against the regulations as written. There was also an acknowledgement that the Regionalization regulations were poorly written causing much of the confusion and it was likely that the plan would be amended in January. The Board continues to be available for questions.

VII. New Business

As many of you know, from time to time, we need to vote at our PTA meetings. In order to vote we will need a quorum of 15 members. Please remember that you may only vote if you have a PTA membership this year. As Co-Presidents, we can only vote together as one vote. Traditionally presidents do not vote unless there is a need to break a vote that is tied. When we conduct a vote, a motion will be made. If the motion is coming out of committee it will not need a second.

1. Nominations Committee Vote:

Our executive board nominations committee members that have been voted in by the executive committee this evening and they are: Danielle Sandjaby, Inna Choi, Tracy Brown, and alternate Livia Kogan. Thank you to everyone who submitted their names tonight. We will now proceed with the election of members to the Nominations Committee. We will now proceed with the vote. To ensure a fair and orderly process, I will first read the list of candidates.

1. Sara Bostwick
2. Helena Lee
3. Rachel Medvin
4. Vaishali Sondhi
5. Jun Xuan

At this time, I would like to ask: is there any discussion? If there are no further questions, we will proceed with the vote. If there are only 2 nominees we will proceed with a block vote. If there are more than 2 nominees we will vote by paper ballot.

Please indicate your vote for each nominee by written ballot - please follow the instructions for voting - please write the number for the person you are voting for as clearly as possible so that we may count your vote correctly. Remember that you may vote for up to 2 members for this committee. Once the votes are counted by the recording secretary and results are ready we will announce the new members. The results of the vote are as follows: Helena Lee and Vaishali Sondhi. Congratulations to our new members of the Nominations Committee. Thank you to everyone who voted.

Committee: Helena Lee, Vaishali Sondhi, Danielle Sandjaby, Inna Choi, Tracy Brown, and alternate Livia Kogan.

VIII. Old Business - None



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IX. Dates to Remember

Finally, we are up to our dates to remember. Please keep an eye on our dates to remember in our weekly updates and our website. **Also, every Friday is our "Show your School Spirit" Day!**

Friendly reminder: you can download our google calendar to your device from our emails or from our website.

November

14, Maker Space Recess
17, 5th Grade Night Out
19, Thanksgiving Luncheon
20, Maker Space Recess
21, School Store
25, Maker Space Recess
26, Pie Sale - Pick Up
26, Last day of coat drive!

27-29, No School

December

3-4, Holiday Boutique
3, SEPTA Resource Fair, 7:30pm, HBT
4 Winter Concert
5 5th Grade Picture Day
5, PTA Meeting, 7:30pm

The meeting is adjourned at 9:15 pm.

Recording Secretary Theresa Seedorf
Attached
Sign in Sheet