

Minutes of the Meeting May 4, 2015

Winchester High School Parent Faculty Association

***Attending:** Malini Dutta, Mikie Ulwick, Paula Michienzi, Kathy Czeck, Heidi Driscoll, Kim Graylin, Karin Sangster, Jo-Anne Sintchak, M.S. Mondel, Joyce Wong, Lina Li, Susan Fagerstrom, Audrey Loria, Elena Langlois, Jody Collins Skinner, Lori Scully, Jean Yu, Jenny Rappole, Lynn Phillips, Elaine Costales, Anne Fantozzi, Amanda Lewis, Xiaomei Wang, Janice Jens, Jing Zhang, and Anita Colasante. **Guests:** Anna Tirone, Chris Kurhajetz, Judy Hession, Tom Haver, Kathy Grace, Michael Marchand.*

Malini Dutta called the meeting to order at 7:45 p.m.

Malini welcomed everyone, and thanked them for coming out on this beautiful day to hear from our excellent panel of Department Heads. Malini introduced Anna Tirone-Foreign Language, Tom Haver-Math, Judy Hession – English, Mike Marchand – Science and Chris Kurhajetz – Social Studies, Kathy Grace- Technology and Engineering Coordinator.

PFA Business

Secretary's Report- Minutes of April 6, 2015 meeting were presented. There were no changes. A motion to accept the minutes, as presented, was made and approved.

Treasurer's Report -Lori Scully presented for Leah Holber, who was not in attendance. The Direct Appeal has raised \$26,277 to date. We have \$25,700 in the bank right now, but we have a few large expenses coming up such as Senior Night Grad Party and a donation to the Scholarship Fund. There is still about \$9000 in teacher grant money to be distributed—hopefully that will happen soon. A motion to accept the Treasurer's Report was made and approved.

Social Committee

Paula Michienzi said that the SC put on a terrific Teacher Appreciation luncheon today. The teachers in attendance at this meeting all acknowledged that it was a very nice event and was much appreciated by the faculty and staff.

Principal's Report — Sean Kiley was not in attendance.

HOT TOPIC – Presentation by Department Heads

Mike Marchand- Head of Science Dept.

Science Dept has not been affected by the construction yet. Next year it will be about the same – little impact by construction. During the 3rd year of construction, there will be a huge impact. Program-wise: AP Environmental Science was added- now have 2 sections. In 9th grade science they are using the co-teaching model in all 3 levels. This is new this year. CP classes have 2 teachers in them. He explained the list of all of the science classes available at WHS.

Judy Hession – Head of English Dept

The construction has been really bad for the English department—impacted by it a lot. Behind the narrowed hallways are the new library and media center which we are looking forward to. There is a lot of noise and it is hard to deal with. There is supposed to be 'No Noise' during MCAS testing—that did not happen. It is very stressful for the teachers.

Ms. Hession went through the Program of Studies for the English department, with a list of available courses.

Kathy Grace - Technology and Engineering Coordinator

The construction has impacted the shops near the gym. The size of the shops will be smaller and during construction the projects worked on will be smaller—no more chairs made in Woodworking shop!

There will be a new class next year—Architectural CAD and Mechanical CAD- they will be using Solidworks software.

Department received a WFEE grant for putting a CTC (Creative Tech Center) in the library next year. This will include a 3D printer.

Next year there will be a Student Help Desk for students who need tech help. If you have a student who is good at helping others with Technology issues- this is for them. It is a class for credit.

Anna Tirone- Foreign Language Dept Head

The DOE wants all kids to have 2 years of foreign language, but WHS does not require it to graduate. Many colleges do require 2+ years of foreign, so we encourage it.

Construction impact has been tough. Listening is the key to learning a foreign language, so when that is interrupted, it is a problem. Next year, half of the department will be in the current front office area and the other half of the department will be in the mods. The computer lab is on its last legs—will be getting a new one in our new space. Ms. Tirone listed the course of studies in foreign language.

Chris Kurhajetz- Social Studies Dept Head

Thanks to a WFEE grant, we will be doing Living History Day again this year. We bring in people from the community to explain how they lived through historic events. This is done at the end of the year—in June. Mr. K. gave examples of some of the speakers from the past years.

Usually for the 9th graders, we have a World Empires Bazaar, but it was not held this year, due to no auditorium space. 11th graders write major research papers. 10th grade honors history participates in National History Day (NHD). This year, two groups won prizes; one student won first prize in Website Design and will go on to Nationals in College Park, Md.

Next year- new senior level course- Modern Middle Eastern History.

American Studies students went to NYC for 4 days in April- saw a Broadway show, went to a Lincoln Center concert, the Met and MOMA. Mr. K has been the dept head for 3 years and he has added 6 new teachers in the past few years.

Tom Haver- Math and Computer Science Dept Head

Math classrooms have been spared from construction impact so far- the noise is not too bad. Next year the math department will be moving to new mods near the train tracks.

Question and Answer Session:

Q. Please talk about AP classes and how many you feel kids should take and how they get into them.

A. Marchand: Teachers will recommend kids for AP after excellent grades, usually in Honors section of base course. AP History is usually Juniors, other APs are mostly Seniors. When a student is recommended for an AP level class, that teacher has no idea how many other AP classes that student is also being recommended for. Kids and their parents have to limit and balance this.

Hession: Only 8 kids have signed up for Humanities this year—it used to be 25-35. We think maybe kids are afraid to have a double course that is not an honors or AP level course. There is a lot of pressure to be in upper level courses.

Q. Group projects—is there any protocol for group projects? It is often hard for kids to find time to meet in groups. Some kids feel left out when making groups.

A.: Teachers all struggle with group projects, too. We try to make arrangements when possible so groups are fair and no one feels left out. But of course that is not always done consistently. We try to use technology to assist with group projects. It is a struggle, but is a very beneficial skill (working in a team) to teach kids.

Q.: Would the Science department entertain an NHD- like event for science community members?

A: Different science classes have had different speakers, i.e. Nobel Laureate in Chemistry and a geneticist, but haven't thought of large event—due to time constraints on teachers.

Q: Has a science Fair ever been considered?

A: Haven't had one in 8-9 years – there has not been interest on the part of the students, nor teacher input.

Q: Parent stated that Mr. Lazard showed a movie in French class that dealt with suicide. Student was upset by movie. Parent wished that teacher had advised parents that this was going to be shown; possibly offered opportunity for kids to opt-out.

A: Ms. Tirone said that is an issue that should be brought up with Mr. Kiley. She will look into it.

Q: There is a web design class that the teacher is requiring kids to sign up for Twitter. Parent is not happy that this is required- should have had parent input.

A: There is will be a new “Acceptable Use Policy” in place in September 2015 that will outline all use of the internet in classes and school.

Q: What is the purpose of a graphic organizer?

A: Ms. Hession explained the use of various types of organizers used in expository writing. She talked about the use of the 11 sentence paragraph (used in History classes, not in English) as one of various ways to move students along in their writing organization.

Q: What is the turn-around time supposed to be for the return of major essay assignments? Kids are not getting papers back in a timely fashion.

A; Ms. Hession said it should be 10 days. Parents at this meeting said that this was generally not the case at all. Let her know specific cases.

The next PFA meeting is scheduled for Monday, June 1 , 2015 at 7:30 pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Elena Langlois
Recording Secretary

