

Minutes of the November 3, 2014  
Winchester High School Parent Faculty Association  
\*\* Approved \*\*

**Attending:** Malini Dutta, Elena Langlois, Loren Schipani, Leah Holber, Kathy Czeck, Lisa Vahey, Karin Sangster, Susan Verdicchio, Principal Sean Kiley, Paula Michienzi, Audrey Loria, Lori Scully, Lynn Phillips, Diane Delury, Jen Garabedian, Roger Hain, Ann Wolf, Joyce Wong, Susan Fergerstrom, Gael Robinson, Janice Jens

Malini Dutta called the meeting to order at 7:35 pm.

Co-President's Remarks- Malini:

Welcome. Roger Hain and Heidi Driscoll were elected to the School Council. Thank you to Kathy Czeck for finishing her 2- year term on the School Council.

The new Freshman Class Parent Reps (Class of 2018) are Nelleke Harris and Emer Morris.

This Wednesday, Nov 5, there is Community Forum at McCall 7-8:30 pm. This will be a panel of local speakers to address the Drug/ stress issues in Winchester.

The Lantern Walk is Nov 11 at 6 pm on The Common. This is a short walk around town to bring attention to the stress our kids are feeling.

Secretary's Report –The minutes from the last PFA meeting on October 16, 2014 were reviewed. There were no comments. Motion to approve minutes was passed.

Treasurer's Report– The year-to-date income from the Direct appeal is \$20,391. An Annual Report was filed with the State of Mass which is a requirement for all Non Profit organizations.

An email blast for the Direct Appeal went out this week—it generated about \$1700.

Social- Paula Michienzi, Loren Scipani, Margo Barnes, Denise George are the social committee. There will be a Holiday Faculty Breakfast on Monday December 8, 7:15- 10:15am. Will be asking for donations of paper goods and raffle items—gift cards, etc.

Principal's Report- Sean Kiley

The current enrollment is 1209 talented kids. The Flu Immunization Clinic was last Friday. The group of School nurses rallied to get it done.

The Co-curricular Clubs are well on their way--trying to organize a list and meeting location/advisor/time so he can market them to kids.

PSAT/SAT took place in school recently. Very impressive how the kids took the test.

October was National Bully Prevention Month. Sean saw a lot of quiet leadership around this topic.

WHS had 4 students who were named as National Merit Semifinalists—they are Henry Connon, Joshua DiNardo, Trevor Kahl and Amy Zhang. This is the top 1% of students nationally. WHS also had 29 Commended Students—this is the top 5% nationally.

Three WHS students won 1<sup>st</sup> Place in Mass. Aeronautics Commission's STEM competition with their project "FLIGHT 01890". They are Jefferson Kim, Scott Czeck and Tom Friedl.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter ends this week. Sean is trying to begin "Students of the Quarter"—teachers nominate to celebrate all kids—not just high achievers, but identify kids who have made significant attempt to overcome obstacles and are dedicated to learning.

Questions:

Q. what is the final number of students enrolled in grade 9? 337 kids

Q. What happened to the Fall play? It did not happen because of auditorium construction.

Q. What is the status of the classroom clocks that were ordered? They are not here yet. Hopefully soon.

Q. Can we get a calendar with the Block “days of the week” published on the WHS website of PFA website? Office Secretary is doing it. Sean will make sure it gets done soon.

Direct Appeal: Co-chairs not present. Lori Scully provided an update. As Treasurer noted, we have raised \$20,000, but that comes from only 168 families out of total population of 998 families. There will be two more email blasts before Thanksgiving asking for donations. There have been no matching donations from employers yet.

#### Grants- Kathy Czech/Karin Sangster

A list of the approved Faculty grants was passed out. Last year we had requests of \$33k, this year only \$17k in requests. New this year we are working with the Central Office for technology grants thru the WFEE’s “Powered UP” program. So any technology grants were supposed to go thru the Central Office and not thru the PFA program. This is likely the main reason for the decrease from \$33k to \$17k in requests over the past two years. Also, the HS construction may have something to do with the decrease.

This year we were able to fund most of the requests. Total approved funding as of right now is \$13,395, we have money left over. We have \$17,300 in the budget for grants. A big grant request each year is art supplies. Also Living History Day, for Grades 9-11 is also a big request each year. The new adjustment counselor, Amber Haines, requested three grants for student groups.

Often things come up during the year and we will evaluate them as we did the initial grants. It is likely we will have more requests in the next few years as we move into the new building.

Kathy Czech explained the criteria and that the PFA executive Board met to review and discuss the recommendations made by the Grants Co chairs. We don’t fund field trips and we try to fund underserved populations. Details of the Criteria are on the Grant Application.

A motion was approved to accept the Grants as presented.

#### Parent To Parent- Lynn Phillips

November 13-- there will be a discussion group at the Winchester Public Library- “Are we Over-Parenting or Under-Disciplining or Doing it Right?”

December 3- Speaker Joani Geltman—will discuss topics from her new book A Survival Guide for Parenting Teens. Info on all events at [www.parenttoparentwinchester.org](http://www.parenttoparentwinchester.org)

#### GUEST SPEAKERS- Suzanne Ontso, WHS Director of Guidance, and Amber Haines, School Adjustment Counselor

Suzanne Ontso: The guidance department sees every student at least twice each year. The department has recently moved up their timelines—freshman now come in in the first 2 weeks in September vs. later in the fall in the past. As of November 1, 79% of our seniors have applied to at least one college. Ten years ago, this number would have been in the 50% range. The department has recently done a Common App workshop to answer specific questions about the process and help Seniors complete the application. The guidance department will not talk with any students about specific colleges until February of Junior year. The kids are under a lot of stress—much earlier than in the past.

Suzanne introduced Ms. Amber Haines, WHS’s new Adjustment Counselor, who started at WHS in September. Amber has worked in the Somerville Schools and in private practice. She has a background in trauma based therapy. Amber loves working in a school full-time and is able to provide “wraparound” services. She is trained in CBT (Cognitive Behavior Therapy) which is useful for treating anxiety. Amber’s goal is to have students get to know her—feel comfortable enough to seek her out if they need to talk, or need help.

Amber has started a few new programs:

- a drop-in lunch group for anyone who would like to talk about stress management.
  - she also hosts a Therapeutic After School Club, that was started by 2 seniors at WHS to focus on stress management.
  - New Student lunch series to introduce new-to-the-school students to adults and peers they can trust in the building.
- Open to all students who would like to meet new friends.

Parent Conversations will be hosted by Amber—one Tues morning a month at 9:00 am for parents to meet informally to hear about and discuss hot topics in the HS.

Amber will have a newsletter on Edline—CARES- Creating Awareness and Readiness.

Tomorrow, Nov 4, is a teacher Professional Development day and all teachers in the district will do an in-service on self

harming behaviors.

There is a Student Support Team which can help identify panic attacks and look for triggers for attacks.

A parent asked whether Amber had any knowledge that Winchester has more stress than other similar towns? Not any more than any other similar town—but stress is on the increase for all kids. There seems to be a general lack of coping skills. In addition, the amount of homework has increased and the culture of “take the hardest class you can” (Honors, AP) is prevalent and is very stressful for kids. Suzanne Ontso said that WHS does not allow freshman or sophomores students to take AP classes for that reason. They will have plenty of time for that when they are juniors or seniors.

A parent asked about the status of WAG (Winchester Advisory Group). WAG is a program where teachers work as advisors—they talk to kids about a major topic during a preset period during school

Sean Kiley said that he has heard mixed reviews about how WAG has worked in the past. WAG is another way for students to see that teachers care. WAG happens once per month and is required by NEASC. Sean will be reviewing this program.

Suzanne Ontso:

Sophomores will be getting Naviance passwords soon and can begin the process of taking “interest” questionnaires.

Naviance keeps track of which schools students have applied to, and been accepted at, so parents/students can see very up-to-date statistics. The Common App Workshop was done the 3<sup>rd</sup> week in September and will continue next year. The curriculum in 2 of the Senior English classes includes the Common App essays.

Junior’s “College Night” is now in February, introduces the process to parents and students.

Three college reps visit after school each day (Tues, Wed and Thurs) in the fall. Schedule is on Edline. Only for juniors and seniors. It’s ok to just stay a minute, or just “hang around” and listen to other’s questions. No pressure.

Gym Requirement: Freshman and Sophomores MUST take one semester of PE—is a Mass State requirement. Juniors and Seniors can seek a waiver if they play a HS sport, or if they do an outside sport for more than 5 hours per week. See student’s guidance counselor.

The next PFA meeting is scheduled for December 1, 2014.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Elena Langlois  
Recording Secretary