

**Minutes for September 9, 2014 Takoma Park Middle School PTA Meeting
TPMS Cafeteria 7:00-8:30 P.M.**

Members in attendance:

Shruti Bhatnagar, President
David Groberg, Treasurer
Frances Cook, Secretary
Alicia Deeny, Principal
Rose Piard
Marla Nix
Lisa Silverberg
Annet Ketter
Anjali Kochar
Mike McCalse
Prabhash Shrestha
Heidi Hessler
Hubert Chang

Shruti Bhatnagar, PTA President, opened the meeting at 7:15 pm by thanking everyone in attendance for taking the time to participate in first PTA meeting of the year. She introduced Ms. Deeny, TPMS Principal asking her to present the Principal's report.

Ms. Deeny began by reporting that TPMS enrollment is now at 1,000 students, with 360 in 6th grade, 314 in 7th grade, and 326 in 8th grade. The school also has more than 100 staff and 1,900 parents. She noted that the school is growing as projected and needs to use some portable classrooms to alleviate classroom sharing. She had requested four portable classrooms for the school and has received one so far, with the possibility of a second one in the near future. She noted that the portable classrooms use the same security precautions as those used in the main building.

Ms. Deeny also reported on test results, noting that for the reading MSA, 90% of students scored either proficient or advanced, for the math MSA, 84% of student scored proficient or advanced, and 100% of student passed the Algebra HSA. She also reported on new technology that the school is receiving: 400 Chromebooks, mainly in the 6th grade, 350 new computers, which is a significant increase. She noted that the teachers are still learning how to make the best educational use of the new technology and are thinking carefully about how best to integrate handheld devices into classwork.

Ms Deeny announced several accolades, including the Most Valuable Team Award for the school's wonderful Building Services Staff and Katherine Wu, now a 9th grader at Blair High School, who was a Broadcom Masters Award Winner. She also reported that the school will be continuing its Cybercivility lessons this year, with three scheduled over the course of the school year, and that she had visited the Outdoor Ed program for 6th graders this week, which was going very well.

Finally, Ms. Deeny discussed collaboration with the PTA, thanking the PTA for the mini-grants program and for sponsoring the Reptile Man presentation at Outdoor Ed. She noted that last year every teacher who requested a mini-grant received one. She also mentioned that last year the staff

co-planned topics for the PTA meetings with the PTA. She asked parents for input on the most useful topics (a survey on possible topics was circulated at the meeting).

Shruti Bhatnagar, PTA President also passed around a second sheet of suggested topics suitable for Middle School that have been shared by PEP. Thanks to Lisa Finkelstein, Vice President of the PTA for working with PEP to get those topics.

Next on the agenda was the proposed budget. David Groberg, PTA Treasurer, presented the draft budget and answered questions from the parents regarding the draft. David shared the process that explained how the PTA officers on the budget committee had reviewed various details, taken input from outgoing officers and the Principal to assess the needs for this year to draft the proposed budget. Shruti also applauded the committee chairs for submitting a work plan for their committee on her request and shared that they had done a great job in planning activities for their committee with a reasonable budget for their proposed plan.

David also shared that last year the band teacher, Ms. Pasquale, had submitted a reimbursement for \$750 which got misplaced by the PTA and hence a reimbursement as not issued. Ms. Pasquale had recently inquired if that reimbursement could still be given. David mentioned he had consulted with the Montgomery County PTA Treasurer who had suggested a way to show accounting in our books to allow for that reimbursement from last year which is now reflected in the budget.

David shared that last year the PTA had a lot of money in savings and they spend most of the money because the county PTA suggests that local PTA's not accumulate a surplus in savings and spend most of the fundraising money to support activities that benefit the children because parents support PTA fundraising so their children can benefit. Hence the PTA started the year with \$6000 but we need to leave more in savings at the end of June 2015 so that there are enough in savings for the PTA to be in a comfortable position.

Shruti added that the 6th grade picnic itself cost \$3500 last summer but this year the quote from the same vendor for an extra 100 people was around \$7000 due to increase in meat prices. As a result the executive committee officers had to work together to find other vendors and quotes. This year the event was catered by another vendor for the same \$3500 but this is an indication that the PTA must anticipate increase in prices and make sure that the PTA has enough funds to cover expenses made during summer at the beginning of the year. Shruti also mentioned that the staff appreciation events was another example of a committee that starts their work in summer by organizing welcome breakfast and lunch for staff during pre-service week. Shruti thanked Heidi Danielski and Tom Tucker, staff appreciation committee for doing an awesome job at organizing staff appreciation events. She also shared that the staff had greatly appreciated the events during pre-service week and applauded the staff appreciation committee during pre-service lunch. Heidi plugged in a request asking parents to support staff appreciation events with donations when requested.

A parent from the audience asked what kind of programs had been funded through mini grants. Ms. Deeny answered that question. Shruti explained how the mini grants process worked. She mentioned that when request for volunteers for all committees was shared at the beginning of the year, mini grants committee attracted most interest. There are seven parents who volunteered and are members of the mini grants committee. This committee will meet with Ms. Deeny to review all applications and with input from Ms. Deeny the applications will be approved. However the PTA can only provide these

funds if there is money and she requested parents to support the PTA's fundraising efforts. The parent asked if the PTA had anyone for grant writing. Shruti shared that the PTA welcomes any volunteers who has the skills for grant writing.

Shruti noted that the executive committee had decided that PTA will be doing Blue Devil Appeal fundraiser in the Fall (Sept-Nov) and Spring (March-May) based on the needs. Shruti introduced Anne Ketter, volunteer who has signed up to be the Blue Devil Appeal Coordinator.

Shruti also introduced Marla Nix, 5k event coordinator and shared that this was a popular event that brought in income to the PTA. Marla mentioned that the event takes place in May but funds typically come in after June. Shruti explained that Lucy Neher from Safe routes to Kids had shared that the check is issued to PTA after June because the SRTK committee takes time to decide how much funds are distributed to all participating schools and how much should be saved for next year's event. Typically the check arrives during summer or presented at the September PTA meeting.

Another question asked by a member was related to the increase in expense for membership dues. Shruti explained that there were two reasons for this increase. The first reason is that the local delegates of schools from state of Maryland voted on increasing the dues by 0.25 this year and another \$0.25 cents next year as a result of which dues payment to state PTA has increased by \$0.25 per member. Local PTA has to pay \$1 per member to Montgomery County PTA and \$4 per member to Maryland State PTA (this includes dues for state and National PTA)

Shruti also noted that due to the increase in dues voted at the state summer convention, TPMS PTA will have to increase the membership fee for staff and low income families to cover the cost of payment of dues to MCCPTA, State and National PTA. Shruti explained the second reason for increase in membership expense is that we have more PTA members than last year hence we have to pay more. Last year TPMS had 208 members and this year so far we have 270 members. However membership dues also bring in income because we only pay a portion in dues to County and State PTA so the PTA does not have to pay from its budget.

A parent asked how the local PTA benefited by paying dues to county and state PTA and how they were used. Shruti explained that it is bylaws requirement that local PTA's pay dues to the county, state and National PTA. The dues they receive are used to provide training to local PTA officers, advocacy on important issues and programs that benefit children. Prabash Shrestha, shared that he is on multiple boards who also charge membership fees and the PTA fees is very nominal compared to the benefits it provides.

Shruti extended thanks to all the 270 members of the community for joining the PTA and encouraged membership growth to strengthen the PTA. She stated that with the increase in student enrolment and growing Capital and operating budget needs, growth in membership helps strengthen the advocacy PTA does to request for resources from the school system and elected officials.

Prabhash Shrestha, TPMS Delegate and PTA member asked if PTA's are allowed to get corporate sponsorship to raise funds for the PTA. Shruti answered the question and shared that PTA's could definitely get sponsors. She had already brought this up for discussion with the executive officers. Shruti had also enquired with Ms. Deeny if the school takes any payment from community

organizations for participation in Back to school Night or 6th Grade welcome picnic. Ms. Deeny had shared that the school does not charge anything because they are not allowed to do fundraising and also because the community organizations are non-profit so the school likes to support and work with them. Shruti mentioned that the PTA needs to be careful about who they can consider as sponsors but any business / corporation who believes in and supports the mission of the PTA can be considered as a sponsor and the PTA can look at ways to work with them. She told parents that if they had any organization in mind that could be a sponsor then those ideas are welcome.

The motion to approve the 2014-2015 PTA budget was made by Anjali Kochar, seconded by Prabash Shrestha , and approved by voice vote.

A motion to approve the following PTA meeting dates also was made by Anjali Kochar, seconded by Prabash Shrestha and Hubert Chang, and approved by voice vote:

Tue September 9, 2014 (7:00pm – 8:30pm)
Tue October 14, 2014 (7:00pm – 8:30pm)
Wed November 12, 2014 (7:00pm – 8:30pm)
No Meeting in December
Tue January 13, 2015 (7:00pm – 8:30pm)
Tue February 10, 2015 (7:00pm – 8:30pm)
Tue March 10, 2015 (7:00pm – 8:30pm)
Tue April 14, 2015 (7:00pm – 8:30pm)
Tue May 12, 2015 (7:00pm – 8:30pm)

In closing statements, Shruti thanked committee chairs and made a special mention of the two PTA volunteers who work behind the scenes all year to support the work of the PTA. Brett Holt, web master who worked during summer to design and create a new PTA web site that is easy to use and updated. She shared that Brett had incorporated features such as a form to collect basic info from members when they pay for membership via PayPal that has helped PTA track member information. Shruti also thanked Jessica Moore, listserv moderator for streamlining the listservs and for helping many parents sign up for the PTA listservs or unsubscribe. Shruti also thanked David Groberg for attending the county financial training and his efforts in drafting the budget.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:20 P.M.

Submitted & Signed By:

Frances Cook, Secretary _____

Final Minutes Approved by the PTA President:

Shruti Bhatnagar _____