

Longfellow PTA Meeting
Minutes of Meeting
February 28, 2008

Attendance

Wilma Bowers, Mrs. O'Hara, Marijo Ahlgrimm, Christine Campe-Price, Thomas Larned, Tamara Larned, Mary Ann Sanders, Barbara Steele, Susan Perla, Ed & Kathy Davis, Terri Gibbons, Flor Silva, Susan Woodward, Fiona Alloworth, Nora Callahan, Lesley Morse, Susanna Betton-Cresce, Roz Shennon, Lucinda Brown, Allan Kim.

Wilma Bowers, PTA President, called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm.

Given recent events of violence in the vicinity surrounding the Longfellow Middle School (LMS), Wilma invited several local law enforcement officials to talk with interested parents about known trends in the area as well as actions parents can and should take to help protect kids and the community. This presentation was featured prior to the actual PTA business meeting of the PTA. A summary of the presentation and discussion is attached hereto.

The regular PTA business meeting followed the presentation.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the meeting on January 10, 2008 were reviewed and approved as presented.

Treasurer's Report

Wilma Bowers distributed the treasurer's report as of February 28. The majority of the remainder of the business meeting involved reviewing the report and determining whether the financial status at this time could cover the reprogramming of previously planned funding which appears to remain unspent so as to be able to accommodate some recent funding requests. A motion to fund additional amounts for the Robotics and Math Clubs was made and approved. The finance report also indicated that, even after funding these additional activities, the amount of surplus originally budgeted for carryover to FY'08/'09 will be maintained.

Principal's Report

Mrs. O'Hara introduced a request to buy picnic tables to be used to give deserving 8th graders the opportunity in the spring to be able to eat lunch outside. There was discussion of fundraising efforts that could be undertaken to fund the picnic tables.

Committee Chair Report

Given that the end of the FY07/08 year is approaching, Wilma discussed the need to get a Nominating Committee busy to find and recruit volunteers for next year's PTA officer slate. She indicated that she'd advertise for a chair of the Nominating Committee.

Phyllis Yoshida reported on a recent Parent Advisory Committee meeting held by FCPS and she indicated that the topic of the meeting focused largely on the difficult budget considerations being contemplated by the School Board.

New Business

Wilma also indicated that she was working with the Guidance Department and staff to put together a program for May for rising 6th graders on how to help parents be better coaches for their kids entering 7th grade.

Anticipating Mr. Lynch's upcoming retirement Wilma talked about thoughts for organizing a going away for Mr. Lynch.

Plans for International Night in April were discussed.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:28 pm.

Presentation during the LMS PTA meeting on February 28, 2008

Wilma Bowers, PTA President, introduced Officer Patrick Lucas, Fairfax County Information Officer and Officer Morris, our School Resource Officer at Longfellow Middle School.

Highlights overviewed by Officer Lucas included:

- The daytime population of the Tysons Corner area now approximates the size of Miami and resultantly, there have been significant changes in activities going on in the area. He commented on the safety at the Tyson's mall indicating that there a lot of larceny and some minor gang activity. Ordinarily, there are two plainclothes police officers located at Tyson's Mall. During the holiday's, the level is increased to twelve officers. He noted that Springfield Mall has a lot of gang activity. He recommended that people, especially women and children, not go to malls alone as women are often followed to cars in the parking lot and robbed or assaulted.
- Recommendations to 'keep your head 'on the swivel''. Always be aware of your surroundings and try not to look like a target.
- Reference to the recent apprehension of several minors who allegedly committed a violent beating on a LMS 8th grader on December 25, 2007 but given the ongoing investigation, he indicated that he could not comment further on the matter.
 - A parent of the LMS 8th grader who was assaulted on Dec. 25 was also at the meeting and offered advice of don't ever think that it's not going to happen to you or your children. Educate your children on what to do. She strongly urged that at any slight inclination of a sense of danger or exposure to strange persons, children should be told to RUN AWAY from the situation as fast as they can. Tell them to RUN & YELL while suspicious characters are approaching and don't wait until something actually happens.
- Sources for finding information on the status of crime activity occurring within Fairfax County. He demonstrated the extensive amount of information available on their web site, www.fairfaxcountry.gov/police. The website includes features that enable one to search their actual neighborhood, or school area etc. for reported crime activities that are updated daily.
- Notes that burglaries in the area have decreased significantly because thieves who formally may have burglarized are now more involved in identity theft – stealing credit cards, etc and purchasing goods.

- Recommendations of the importance and role of parents educating their kids of the dangers that they face in some common simple everyday activities.....for example, what to pay attention of at the bus stops or in walking home etc.
- General guidelines that that trouble occurs or crime happens when the following 3 conditions exist simultaneously: 1) an opportunity 2) a target and 3) a desire. Police tactics and programs therefore often concentrate on:
 - trying to reduce the 'opportunities'
 - minimize the availability of targets – 'harden' the target/make them tougher to exploit
- An overview of Fairfax County police programs offered free including:
 - home safety inspections to help residents determine the level of security and offer tips for improving security and
 - a free course for women called Sexual Assault Free & Empowerment (SAFE)

LMS School Resource Officer, Officer Morris indicated that within LMS itself:

- There've been no or minimal complaints involving weapons.
- No drugs have been confiscated within the school or on premises, but it's believed that some amount of drug trade is taking place off school premises.
- Bullying and cyber bullying seems to be on the rise.
 - Another useful website is the National Crime Prevention Council.
 - Cyber bullying is difficult and time consuming to track through the web.
 - Kids need to know that it is a crime to create "hate sights".
 - LMS is talking to kids about cyber crimes but the school is not responsible for this role.

Mrs. O'Hara, Asst. Principal spoke on some school privacy obligations. She indicated that cell phones are a big disruptive problem with kids 'texting' during instructional class time. LMS recently informed all students and parents that cell phones were going to need to be placed in lockers between 7:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. She indicated a need to watch out for photography capabilities available on the cell phones and where those photos may go or how they may be used.