

## **Burr School PTO Minutes October 26, 2004**

### **Approval of Minutes:**

The September minutes were read, there was a motion to accept, it was seconded and they were approved.

### **Food Allergy Policy: Marie Phillips, School Nurse**

Ms. Phillips discussed the Newton Public Schools Food Allergy Policy. The significant change to the policy this year is that classroom celebrations will no longer include food. Ms. Phillips then answered questions from parents. The questions ranged from how allergy medications were administered to how to keep food policies consistent within the school. For further information see:

Newton's Food Allergy Policy: <http://www.newtonpublicschools.com/Documents/Policies/040510-LifeThreateningFoodAllergyPolicyStatement.pdf>

Newton School Committee's Guidelines:

<http://www.newtonpublicschools.com/Documents/Policies/040510-LifeThreateningFoodAllergiesGuidelines.pdf>

### **Business Updates**

- 1) Halloween Family Fun Night – Jeanie Giglio reported that event planning was on track and there seemed to be plenty of volunteers.
- 2) Election Bake Sale – Holli Roth is still looking for volunteers. The goal in a big election year like this one is to earn \$1000.00.
- 3) Book Fair – will be held week of November 15, 2004. It will be open 1 hour before the Nov. PTO meeting.
- 4) Movie Morning – have still not connected with West Newton Cinema.
- 5) March Fundraiser – will be held April 2 @ Riverside Office Park ~ Game Night.
- 6) Traffic – the “Education Campaign” last week was discussed.
- 7) Public Conversations Project – Cindy Bencal explained that the first meeting, Nov. 8, will be a big community meeting to explain the process. Then there will be 4 small group meetings to facilitate dialog among community members.
- 8) E-mail lists – Lisa Mirabile gave a brief history of Burr PTO's email lists, including the suspension of all email lists last spring after a very heated and destructive discussion arose. She explained last year all parent emails had been automatically added to the list (an “opt-out” system) rather than making people specifically add themselves (an “opt-in” system). Further, the list was open to any member for posting, with the intent of creating a electronic “bulletin board” where parents could announce yard sales, seek babysitters, etc. There had never been an intent to create a discussion forum; had one been envisioned, no one would have been automatically subscribed to the list. Therefore, the events of last spring were an unintended anomaly.

Lisa explained that the PTO Board had met and discussed the subject of email lists. The Board decided that the PTO was not interested in creating an online discussion forum, since the nature of an online forum was so poorly suited to a

constructive discussion of substantive issues. However, it was noted that any parent wishing to create such a forum could certainly do so, as one parent had done last spring using Yahoo Groups.

However, the Board felt that email was a vital means of communication, and proposed to reinstate a one-way email list for PTO business announcements. Anything that would go home as a flyer, for example, would be appropriate for this list. There was discussion about potentially adding classified type items to this list as well.

In addition, the board had investigated and liked the services offered by an email-list management company called Constant Contact. Using Constant Contact would relieve the PTO of the technical work of the email list. In addition, Constant Contact makes it easy to create attractive, well formatted emails that were easier and more inviting to read, and would allow the PTO to create various “interest groups”: this would allow subscribers to check off their particular interests, such as individual classrooms, a community classifieds list, or an online version of the Burr Bulletin. The co-presidents would act as the “gatekeepers.” The cost would be \$129.00/year. Lisa asked for a show of hands of people that would be interested in this. The majority said yes.

9) Future Meetings -- The date for November’s PTO meeting needs to be changed due to the PCP meeting scheduled for that night. Also, ideas for future meeting topics were put forth, including:

- New Report Cards
- MCAS discussion
- Technology Presentation
- Mental Health
- Open Circle Language
- Speakers – Bullying, ADD etc.

Meeting was adjourned.