

Newton South Council Meeting Minutes
Submitted by Deena David
May 17, 2011

Present: Barry Wanger, Marci Sapers, Janet Wertheimer, Ryan Augusta, Marcia Okun, Jeanne O'Reilly, Joel Stembridge, Mona Hochberg, Lisa Rucinski, Liz Richardson, Deena David, Chip DiMarco, Tom Lee, Sue Flicop.

The meeting was called to order at 4:30 pm followed by introductions.

The discussion on the College Admission process was postponed to a later date.

Principal's update

SPED

The Special Education Department at Newton South will be undergoing a reorganization. Faced with losing seven positions for the 2011-2012 school year, two consultants have been hired to meet with SPED department heads, teachers, parents and school administrators to review all aspects of the Special Education Program at South. At a recent meeting, parents expressed satisfaction with the services offered at South, but expressed concern regarding the "student experience." Many SPED students do not feel a part of the general student community and at times feel unwelcomed, according to Joel. He said this is an area that needs improvement and is optimistic that this will be addressed in the reorganization effort.

Fiscal Budget 2011-2012

There is no news on possible budget add-backs at this time. The city is awaiting the passage of the Massachusetts State Budget.

Public Comment: none

Newly Elected Council Members

Sue Flicop and Linda Green will join the NS Council next year as Mona and Barry's terms expire after the next meeting. r Sue was present at this meeting and shared a bit of her background. Sue is the parent of three girls: a NSHS freshman, a 6th grader at Oak Hill, and a 4th grader at Bowen. She has been active in the Newton community for many years as a parent leader and advocate for Newton public schools. Sue is currently serving on the Bowen School Council and is in her fourth and final year as co-chair of Newton PTO Council, as well as Health and Safety chair. She was a parent representative on the Strategic Planning Team for Newton Public Schools.

NS Council Co-Chair needed for next year

Please notify Marci or Joel by the next meeting (June 14) if you would like to co-chair the council with Marci next year. Main duties include: setting the agenda with the

Principal, co-running the meeting, overseeing the work of committees, sending out email reminders for meetings, snacks and minutes.

Stress and Resiliency Survey Update

Chip and Ryan reported on a pilot survey they have designed and administered to a sample of South students in various grades and curriculum levels. The 30 questions are designed to profile how the test takers see themselves...as achievers or not, resilient, stressed, etc. The survey itself is a work in progress and when the final survey is developed, it will be administered to students, teachers, and parents. Specific actions to build resiliency and reduce stress will be developed upon completion of the study. Barry asked if currently known “stress factors” such as the college admissions process can be addressed now rather than waiting for the results of the completed survey. Marci reported that the Lexington School System has a building resiliency program in place and suggested that Chip and Ryan contact the LPS.

Newton South Alumni Association

Deena reported that Joel is interested in the creation of an alumni association for NSHS. A proposed purpose would be to create a sustainable legacy benefiting NSHS students through programmatic/support services (tutoring, mentoring, networking, internships, lectures, etc.), fundraising, and community building among the generations of NSHS students. A small group has formed to explore this. Joel will be meeting with the Superintendent, School Committee, and Newton Schools Foundation to review current NPS policies on equity and fundraising. He will also meet with NN principal, Jen Price, to discuss possibilities for a NN alumni association.

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