

**MASON PTO  
BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
JANUARY 9, 2018**

**Jeff Somers**

President

**Katie Batts**  
Vice President

**Kelly Sendoykas**  
Treasurer

**Kris McKean**  
Recording Secretary  
& Membership

**Krista Somers**  
Corresponding Secretary  
Communications

**Valerie Albright**  
School Board  
Observer

**Jennifer Amori**  
Fundraising  
Chair

**Cynthia Latimer**  
PTO Council  
Observer

**Kim Rahi**  
Volunteers  
Chair

**Kristen Rubart**  
ASD Emissary  
& Membership

**Amy Schubert**  
Hospitality  
Chair

**Andrea VanBecelaere**  
Volunteers  
Chair

**Roy Bishop**  
Principal

**Anna Court / Margarette Scheich**  
Teacher Representatives

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~ IN ATTENDANCE ~

**BOARD MEMBERS:**

Valerie Albright  
Jennifer Amori  
Katie Batts  
Roy Bishop  
Cynthia Latimer  
Kris McKean  
Kim Rahi  
Kristen Rubart  
Margarette Scheich  
Amy Schubert  
Kelly Sendoykas  
Jeff Somers  
Krista Somers  
Andrea VanBecelaere

**GUESTS:**

Demitrious Baird  
Luis Santiago-Baird  
Kai Bayless  
Misty Cooper  
Christine Eltervoog  
Josh Eltervoog  
Eddie Hartman  
**Mrs. Hartman**  
Elizabeth Hubbell  
John Huizdos  
Christine Kline  
Peter Kosel

Alison Kosel  
Amy Lyons  
Adrienne Nash  
Laura Nealssohn  
Rome Randolph  
Emily Rennpage  
Kristina Sharpe  
Christina Slone  
Joe VanBecelaere  
Courtney Widzinski

**President's Call to Order – 7:06 p.m.**

**PRESIDENT'S UPDATE ON WINTER FORMAL – Jeff Somers:**

- The plans for this year's formal have been developed. While not complete, to date, they include the following:
  - ❖ The "parent/special person" dances have been combined and one event will take place instead.
  - ❖ It will be called the Willie Wonka Winter Formal and will be themed, in décor, accordingly.
  - ❖ The date is Saturday, March 3, 2018 – 6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.
  - ❖ It is for Mason students only and they must be accompanied by at least one adult.
  - ❖ It will take place at Parcels, where there are two gyms adjacent to each other. One gym will be used to dance, with a D-Jay and the other will host refreshments and games, including various raffles and the Willie Wonka movie will run throughout the event.
  - ❖ "Golden Tickets" will be issued for admittance at \$8 each. All will be pre-sold.
  - ❖ A photo booth will be available.
  - ❖ Arrangements have been made with Moehring for corsages & boutonnieres at \$5.
  - ❖ Arrangements have been made with Watermark for dinner (4:30 – 6:00) -- 10% of proceeds come back to Mason. They will also have the circus act, which was a big hit for the last fundraiser.

## GUESTS' COMMENTS:

- After the plans for the winter formal were shared, the floor was opened for comments. They are listed, as they were heard, with occasional paraphrasing. They are grouped by the topic being discussed. Context is included to provide clarity, when necessary. Some “comments” were actually “questions” and the answers to those follow in italicized blue type. Not every comment was captured, however, the salient points are presented and the essence of the meeting is clear:
  - Immediate reactions and opening comments: “Sounds great!” “Wonderful!” “I like it!”
  - Part of the plan included the reminder that this event is meant only for Mason students and an accompanying adult. A parent addressed that by saying, “We would require a babysitter, if siblings are not allowed to attend.” A guest responded that siblings have not been allowed to attend the previous versions of this event, and that part remains unchanged.
  - A guest felt that the PTO had not communicated the reason for the change and asked if he could have an explanation. *(Board members responded that the reason is that several children have not been able to attend either dance, because there is no eligible adult to take them. The change was made in consideration of this issue, in an effort to make sure every child was included.)*
  - One guest questioned whether there was actual proof that some children were unable to attend, and said, “This seems to be based on second-hand information.” In response, another guest said that she had a personal experience and was not citing anything that she had been told. Following that, another guest offered a subsequent example and said that he knew, personally, “of a child who recently lost her father and had no option to attend.” Additionally, Mr. Bishop said that last year, he was asked, by more than one student, to escort them to the dance. He had to decline, because he has a daughter of his own, and she had to be his priority. That was difficult. Knowing that some children would be left out was not acceptable, going forward.
  - A parent, who was disappointed with the change, when he first learned of it, said, “The Daddy-Daughter Dance will be missed, but I do not object to this new event.” He also expressed a hope that we would revisit this next year and, based on results of this year’s event, might consider reinstating the parent/child dances. *(The Board reviews the slate of events annually and adjustments are made, accordingly.)*
  - There were comments from a couple of parents regarding the importance of upholding tradition. One parent said that he was a product of a single-parent household and he remembers how special it was to attend a Mother/Son dance with his mom. He felt like this tradition was valuable and should not be discarded. There were also comments that describe Mason as a special place and suggested that these dances were part of that dynamic. While no one disagreed with the description of Mason, there were varying points of view on what made it special. “Inclusion” was cited as most important. In addition, many felt that children are led by a parent’s perspective and that point was voiced by guests, who said, “Sounds like that ‘special’ piece can still happen. That part is created at home.” “The tradition of making it special is up to parents.” “This doesn’t seem to be taking anything away from anybody. It is adding a new experience.”
  - Since some still wanted the genders divided and spoke about “the girls not wanting boys there” and “the boys not wanting girls there.” A few parents reminded the group that a “Daddy-Daughter” dance is offered through the City and is held at South. The cost is comparable. (There is also a “Mother-Son” Movie offered by the City of GPW.)
  - A guest, who wanted to keep the dances divided by gender, said, “What about boys and girls together? I am uncomfortable with that.” Others responded by saying, “These boys and girls are in school together all day, every day.” “Parents are there to chaperone.” “That does not seem like much of an issue.” “I have friends who send their children to private schools. They have combined dances, without a problem.”
  - A suggestion was made to keep the dance separate and to simply change the names to be gender-specific. A guest asked, “What happened to the proposed “Boy” & “Girl” dance idea?” A guest said he didn’t see how that addressed the real issue, or how it changed anything. He reiterated that boys and girls together was not a concern. The kids were sharing the event with their parents. “Managing the expectation is the parent’s responsibility.”

## GUESTS' COMMENTS CONTINUED:

- A parent, who felt strongly about keeping the dances separate and the genders divided, said, “Feels like this change is unfair. A third event should be added.” A guest, with past experience on the PTO, responded and said that “putting on an event like this is labor-intensive.” Adding a third event seemed unreasonable to her. The parent, who made the suggestion, said that it would not be that difficult to put on a third event and that he could manage it himself, by “renting a place and adding some decorations.” Another parent supported the third event and felt it might solve the problem. Another parent said that a third event felt even more divisive, in that it provided for girls who had escorts and boys who had escorts and this third group would be for “everybody else.” Another guest said that a third event might not attract enough people to warrant the effort.
- A parent, who was trying to understand all the facets that impacted the decision, asked if this was a “cost” issue. *(Jeff Somers explained that it was not a cost issue and that we had a budget for each event and combined them, because we don't want to eliminate anyone.)*
- **The following comments were made as we wrapped up the discussion. They are concluding thoughts:**
  - “We deliberately chose a public school so that our daughter would have exposure to a variety of people who were not just like her. We wanted her to experience diversity.”
  - “The words ‘split’ and ‘divide’ are not inclusive. We are striving for inclusion.”
  - “We should not be rigid. We need to be open to the idea of change.”
  - “I witnessed the planning meeting to prepare for this meeting, because it took place at my house. It took four hours. The discussion was thorough and covered a lot of ground. Every decision was made carefully and with the kids in mind.”
  - “Props to the PTO for creative ideas and moving it to Parcels and giving everyone something to do at the event.”
  - “The November meeting was full of discussion and we did not feel like we had tripped a hot button. We were excited to plan an event that was open to all our Mason kids.”
  - “The PTO minutes were not well presented and were written with bias.”
  - “A secret meeting was held and only the Board attended.” *(Katie Batts responded, and said that the meeting was not “secret” – it was a meeting called to discuss comments, threats and objections that some parents were making. She wanted to inform the Board and talk through any outstanding concerns. Closed Board meetings are permitted, when necessary. The results of that meeting were added to the December minutes as an addendum.)*
  - “Can we create a suggestion box, so that parents can contribute ideas for this event?” *(Jeff Somers asked that people email any thoughts to him. It was suggested that he create a time frame for these submissions and that it not be a forum or a complaint center.)*
  - A parent commented, “The goal, now, should be to make this happen and move on.”

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*The Board's position is that the decision for the winter formal supports Mason's culture of inclusion; that it was made with the best interest of all Mason students in mind; and, that it provides an opportunity for every child to attend. Further, the expanded entertainment offerings, made possible by the two adjacent gyms at Parcels, provide options for children who may not have an interest in dancing. We are sensitive to those who are disappointed because the tradition of a Parent/Child dance is important to them, but feel that, with the arrangements for discounted flowers and a reserved time at a restaurant, the part that makes that tradition special can still take place. We also hope we can start a new tradition for our entire student body – specifically those children who have not had this experience at all. For those who are reluctant to accept this new approach, the City of GPW offers a Daddy/Daughter dance, as well as a Mother/Son event each year. Our hope is that our Mason community will come together and give this a try, before passing judgment.*

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**PRINCIPAL'S REPORT – Roy Bishop:**

- Kindness Week is January 22 – 26
- Flyer for donations, by grade, for the Great Kindness Challenge Week has gone home and is posted. Items are due by January 26<sup>th</sup>
- Mason's 100<sup>th</sup> Day Kindness Giveback will have students contributing \$1 toward the purchase of items the homeless (socks and gloves, etc.)
- Everyone is being encouraged to make reading a priority.
- \$400 in bottle returns.
- 40% of students have had no absence in December.
- January is "no tardy" month.
- Parking lot plan is working well.
- No Left Turn sign (into Mason lot from Vernier) will go up soon.

It was suggested that there be some warning for drivers as they approach Mason, because the far right driving lane is now a standing lane for drivers to wait to enter the lot. Flashers are used on stopped vehicles, but there is a concern that drivers will not react in time. Additionally, there was some discussion of how we might alleviate some of the congestion, in general. Someone suggested we see if we can get older students to become walking buddies and help to get younger children to their parent's vehicles – especially for parents who park on Anita. Mr. Bishop will follow up to see what can be done and will report back at our February meeting.

**TEACHER REPRESENTATIVE – Margarete Scheich:**

- Still waiting to hear back on the tree decorating contest at the Edsel Ford House. Expect results any day now.
- Y5/Kindergarten Information Night is scheduled for January 18<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. in the library. Refreshments requested.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS****FUNDRAISING – Jennifer Amori:**

- No report.

**HOSPITALITY – Amy Schubert:**

- No report.
- Will accommodate any dietary needs for upcoming event. Parents to submit requests.

**VOLUNTEERS – Kim Rahi & Andrea VanBecelaere:**

- Still need volunteers for the lunch period (11:30 – 12:30.) Another announcement will be made via various channels, including sign-up genius. On-call people would be great.
- Will need many volunteers for the event. Variety of duties. Considering service hours for students to relieve parents. Rachel Butler at Parcels is in charge of NHJS and can probably provide a list of available helpers.

**SCHOOL BOARD OBSERVER – Valerie Albright:**

- Report is on PTO website.

**PTO COUNCIL OBSERVER – Cynthia Latimer:**

- No meeting this month. Next meeting is in February.

**ASD EMISSARY – Kristen Rubart:**

- ASD video presentation with Q&A was delivered to every classroom on December 19<sup>th</sup>. The children were engaged and asked wonderful questions. Very responsive to what they saw. Overall a wonderful experience.

## **BOARD REPORTS**

### **CORRESPONDING/COMMUNICATIONS SECRETARY – Krista Somers:**

- No report. But called for the Volunteer of the Month. Kristina Sharpe was nominated and approved for her work in the parking lot each day.

### **RECORDING SECRETARY – Kris McKean:**

- No report.

### **TREASURER – Kelly Sendoykas:**

- Provided updated hard copy of current budget. Only activity was in gift cards and in reimbursements for Merry Morning event.

### **VICE PRESIDENT – Katie Batts:**

- No report.

### **PRESIDENT – Jeff Somers:**

- The minutes from December 12, 2017 meeting were approved via email, therefore, there was no call to do so at this meeting. They have been posted to the PTO website.
- Spring Fest will need to form planning committee.
- Moehring has agreed to allow us to wrap baskets there again this year.

### **OTHER ITEMS:**

- Parents for Unity Diversity Meeting is scheduled for January 18th at 6:30 p.m. at Maire School in the library.
- Beginning stages of discussions to form a school diversity group at Mason. Meeting planned for January 22<sup>nd</sup> at 6:30 p.m. in Room 201.

### **OUTSTANDING BUSINESS:**

- Mindfulness Training was to be revisited at this meeting, after a follow-up with Katie Scarsella to answer some outstanding questions. However, our agenda was very full, so the answers were distributed via email to Board members and approval was confirmed to move forward. The sessions total cost is \$1,900, however, a \$1,000 grant was obtained and the PTO has agreed to cover the remaining \$900 balance.
- It was proposed that we survey the teachers to see what their priorities might be, before committing to any programs next year. We should have an outline of what expenses are and then make a more informed decision regarding any proposals, going forward. We agreed to revisit this discussion in January. To date, we do not have a list. We will follow up with Teacher Representatives and report back when information is available.
- We agreed to form a small committee to review the current conditions and research / recommend ways to alleviate some of the issues that continue to plague the parking lot. However, Mr. Bishop has worked closely with the GPW Police Department and we will wait to see if the new procedures alleviate the problems

**Jeff Somers called for a motion to adjourn.  
Kristen Rubart so motioned – seconded by many.  
Meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.**

**Next meeting: Tuesday, February 15, 2018 – 7:00 p.m.**