

# MINUTES

Fairfield Elementary School PTA

September 17, 2020 | 8:30 – 9:40 PM

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## Welcome and Introductions

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Alisha Grimm opened the virtual meeting, which included 59 participants, and led all attendees in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Executive Board Members were then introduced as follows:

- Alisha Grimm / Jackie LaBarbera: Co-Presidents
- Tatum Salembier: First Vice President
- Donna Scheuer: Second Vice President
- April Lazarus: Treasurer
- Maureen Romano: Corresponding Secretary
- Joanna Cepregi, PhD: Recording Secretary

The members of the Administration and Faculty were then introduced as follows:

- Dr. Gerhard, Principal
- Mrs. Fernandez, Assistant Principal
- Mrs. Crowley, K-2 Teacher Representative
- Mrs. Meininger, 3-5 Teacher Representative

Alisha Grimm then provided instructions for submitting questions and comments via chat to facilitate an open forum for the meeting.

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## Principal and Assistant Principal Reports

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The Principal's Report was provided by Dr. Kristi Gerhard.

- Overall View: Dr. Gerhard began with a positive comment about being back together in-person, noted how smooth the opening transition was, and stressed that students are following protocols and being patient, kind, and cooperative.
- Notes of Appreciation: She thanked parents for their support, for diligently completing the daily health questionnaires, and for adhering to the new arrival and dismissal procedures. She further thanked the teachers, staff, custodians, and everyone who has helped make Fairfield's reopening a success, and thanked the PTA for the welcome back luncheon that was organized for the teachers and staff members.
- Distance Learning Update: Dr. Gerhard also noted that students participating in Distance Learning are doing well, despite initial technical issues that have since been resolved.
- Outdoor Areas Update: She stated that the school is utilizing the outdoor space a lot this year, with additional staff and security in place to ensure that outdoor activities are safe and positive experiences. She also acknowledged that while recess has been challenging, students are able to play games (e.g., Red Light / Green Light, Simon Says, etc.) while maintaining social distancing standards (e.g., arms-length apart) and can wear masks if they want to play in closer proximity to one another. She also noted that equipment may be added as early as next week to enhance outdoor play in a safe manner, and that options for utilizing the playground are still being explored (current protocols require 10 mins after disinfectant application before use which presents issues for daily school-wide use).
- Concerns Regarding Geese: Dr. Gerhard also addressed concerns raised about geese feces on the field, and informed the PTA that the district has purchased Windstorm devices that will be used to blow droppings to a designated area and are developing schedules to ensure that the field is as clean as possible for school use. She also noted that the Town Geese Control program may not be feasible given that the geese return after dogs leave the area, and that chairs and benches pose additional logistical issues, but that the administration is still considering options. One PTA member, Elizabeth Foresta, also suggested using the field as a dog park in off hours to help address the issue, and Dr. Gerhard said that she would explore the option. Donna Scheuer also

noted later in the meeting that the district is asking each school to hold a focus group to develop creative solutions that will enable the students to maximize outdoor time in a safe, hygienic way since several concerns were raised about the current process of using beach towels. Donna Scheuer asked that anyone who would like to participate in the focus group (9/18/20 at 11AM) should contact her directly ([DonnaMcGoey@gmail.com](mailto:DonnaMcGoey@gmail.com)).

- Dr. Gerhard also addressed questions sent in and/or asked by parents throughout the meeting.
  - One parent asked via email about how teachers are promoting social and emotional health of students given the new protocols in place. Dr. Gerhard noted that while wearing masks, kids are still able to interact, turn and speak to each other, and collaborate. While materials are not shared, group projects and collaboration are still taking place.
  - Another parent asked via email if reading and/or math support was reduced from 5 to 3 days per week, and if so, why that decision was made. Dr. Gerhard assured the PTA that while classes are not currently mixing, pushing-in is occurring, as are IEP-mandated and state-mandated pull-out services, with additional services being added as protocols are put in place.
  - One parent also via email asked about Back to School Night and Dr. Gerhard explained that videos from individual teachers will be posted by 4PM on Monday, September 21, on the PowerSchool learning page (i.e., the landing page for each teacher). These videos will include presentations and pictures and/or videos of the teacher.
  - Lauren Klemballa asked if we could hold a Halloween Parade if social distancing is maintained and Dr. Gerhard stated that she will meet with the PTA next week to discuss safe and feasible options.
  - Michelle Cawley asked for clarification regarding mask breaks. Dr. Gerhard stated that teachers do take students outside for mask breaks, depending upon the lesson plan and weather, and that students are currently having 2 morning breaks and 2 afternoon breaks, in addition to lunch and recess.
  - Elizabeth Foresta asked if there is any evidence that teachers feel the reopening plan is successful. Dr. Gerhard noted that they are talking to the teachers daily, and hear it is going well and continues to improve daily. Mrs. Meininger also noted that while the teachers were nervous about reopening, they are all now recognizing the benefits of returning to the live teaching setting and how happy everyone is to be back.
  - Nicole Young asked for specific information regarding our closing protocol if, and when, there is a positive COVID-19 case at Fairfield. Dr. Gerhard stated that each case is unique and that the details of any positive cases will be carefully reviewed, and the school will work with the Department of Health if, and when, a case occurs at Fairfield.

Mrs. Katherine Fernandez, Fairfield's Assistant Principal, also provided a report.

- Overall View: Mrs. Fernandez similarly voiced her positive views of the reopening.
- Notes of Appreciation: She also thanked the PTA for the welcome luncheon and offered praise for the creative bulletin board designed to celebrate September Birthdays. In addition, she noted that she appreciated everyone adhering to the new protocols and supporting the transition of students going back to school.
- Drop-off Process: Mrs. Fernandez also asked that everyone remain patient with the drop-and-go process. To this end, Dr. Gerhard reminded the attendees that Prospect Place and the Circle are the drop-and-go areas and should only be utilized by students who can exit their vehicle independently and quickly (i.e., if a student cannot get out independently, she asked parents to park in an appropriate location and walk them to the door).

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## Teacher Reports

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The Teacher's Report for Grades K-2 was provided by Mrs. Crowley. She noted that the kids are doing great and are settling back into their routines. She also stressed that dismissal procedures with separate grade level per door is working well.

The Teacher's Report for Grades 3-5 was provided by Mrs. Meininger who thanked parents for sending children back with a positive mindset. She noted that the students are all happy to be back and are glad to see friends, and reassured the attendees that the students do have time to interact safely with masks from their seats. She also stressed that reading and writing workshops are occurring as further evidence that the students are interacting and collaborating. She praised the students for being responsible with their Chromebooks, utilizing the PowerSchool pages, and logging into

the Clever portal. She also thanked the PTA for the luncheon and echoed the positive outlook staff, students, administrators, and parents are all embracing for this challenging school year.

Later in the meeting, Alisha Grimm reminded Mrs. Meininger, Mrs. Crowley, Dr. Gerhard, and Mrs. Fernandez of the importance of having teachers become active PTA members and to please encourage other teachers to join.

### August 10, 2020 Meeting Minutes

The minutes from the August meeting were presented by Dr. Joanna Cepregi and were approved by Nicole Young and Michelle Carroll.

### Treasurer's Report

The 2019 Audit Report was presented by April Lazarus and approved by Kristi Ferrante and Kelly Rowland.

The 2020-2021 Budget Report was also presented by April Lazarus and approved by Tracey Sonntag and Michelle Carroll.

### Co-Presidents' Report

Alisha Grimm and Jackie LaBarbera presented the Co-Presidents Report and provided updates on multiple initiatives.

- Back to School BBQ: Alisha Grimm noted that this was cancelled, but that an end of year event may be possible.
- Teacher Appreciation Lunch: Alisha Grimm noted that Sequa Deli supplied a boxed lunch on September 2<sup>nd</sup> for teachers and staff, and that it was very well received.
- Welcome Back Gift and Lanyards: Alisha Grimm noted that the PTA distributed one mask lanyard to all students in the building and that additional lanyards are for sale at \$8 each (Fairfield Strong in Red and White; Massapequa in Blue and Gold). The link to purchase additional lanyards was also shared (<https://my.cheddarup.com/c/ffmasklanyards>).
- Label Fundraiser: Jackie LaBarbera thanked everyone for making this a successful fundraiser with [www.LabelDaddy.com](http://www.LabelDaddy.com) and noted that it is likely to occur next year as well.
- Kindergarten Signs and Welcome Packets: Jackie LaBarbera thanked April Lazarus and Tatum Salembier for organizing and distributing the welcome signs and packets to kindergarten families, and that the PTA received a very positive response from parents. Kristen Busby and Elaine Walsh also commented during the meeting that they appreciated the signs. Jackie LaBarbera asked parents to send in additional photos if they have any.
- Class Parents Update: Jackie LaBarbera noted that the committee met this week and that class parents will be notified next week, with additional information shared after that point.

### Vice Presidents' Report

Tatum Salembier presented the First VP Report.

- Picture Day: She noted this was cancelled in the Fall, but a spring one is possible.<sup>1</sup>
- Dine Around: Tatum Salembier presented the plan of work for the year, and it was approved by Katrina McGrath and Kelly Rowland. Tracey Sonntag presented an update for September (Leonardo's agreed to host an event on Wednesday, September 30<sup>th</sup>, and give back 15% of proceeds to the PTA), Kelly Rowland volunteered to lead the October event, and Tina McClenahan volunteered for the November event.
- Reflections: Dr. Joanna Cepregi provided a brief overview of the program, noting that the 2020-2021 theme is "I Matter Because..." and entries will be emailed in instead of collected in person. She also presented the plan of work and it was approved by Katrina McGrath and Donna Scheuer. Mariana Beach volunteered for the committee.

<sup>1</sup> While the fall Picture Day was noted as cancelled during the PTA meeting, it has since been set for October 5.

Donna Scheuer presented the Second VP Report.

- Holiday Fair: Kim Matteson and Erin McCormack are working to organize a virtual holiday fair, potentially with Little Treasures, and including interactive and/or in-school shopping opportunities. There is a meeting next week to discuss options in greater detail. The plan of work was approved by Mariana Beach and Kristen Busby.
- Fall Plant Sale: Kelly Rowland presented the plan of work and is currently calling local nurseries. The plan of work was approved by Lauren Klemballa and Julia Santiago.
- PTA Website, Emails, and Social Media Reminders: Donna Scheuer noted how the process for sharing information is going to be different this year as paperwork will not be sent home as in prior years. As such, she reminded everyone to utilize the PTA website ([www.FairfieldPTA.org](http://www.FairfieldPTA.org)), the Facebook Page ([www.facebook.com/FairfieldPTA](http://www.facebook.com/FairfieldPTA)) and to sign up with Remind (text @FFE2021 to 81010). She also stressed the importance of being a paid PTA member as that guarantees you will get all the news and correspondence, and reminded attendees that you can sign up at <https://fairfield.memberhub.store>. She also noted that this information will be available on the PTA website and Facebook page. Tina McClenahan provided positive feedback on the updated website.

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### Correspondence Report

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Maureen Romano presented correspondence from Dr. Gerhard, Mrs. Fernandez, and Lisa Perucca (from Fairfield's general office) noting gratitude and praise for the welcome back lunch.

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### Board of Education (BoE) Report

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Maureen Romano provided an update from the Board of Education meetings, noting that the meetings are very informative (e.g., back to school night information was available during their session before school announcements were made) and encouraged others to log on to YouTube to view the meetings live or at any time after as they are recorded.

She also reported that Ms. Lori Dano is the supervisor for Distance Learning and that approximately 400 students are currently enrolled (200 each at the Elementary and Secondary levels).

The next BoE meeting is Thursday, 9/24/20, and will be aired and recorded on YouTube.

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### Meeting Close

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Alisha Grimm stressed that this year would require a lot of creative thinking and problem-solving (e.g., Halloween activities) and asked the PTA members to bring forth individual ideas via email, text, Facebook, etc.

Jackie LaBarbera reiterated the goal of adding elements of fun and positive energy to this year and emphasized that the board really wants to hear from the members.

Alisha Grimm noted that the next meeting would be held on 10/14/20 at 9:45 AM virtually, and that the timing of future meetings may be revisited depending upon turnout and feedback received following the October meeting.

The meeting was then adjourned.