

W. T. WOODSON PTSA BOARD MEETING  
M I N U T E S  
April 14, 2009 ☞ Woodson Library

Meeting called to order at 7:06 p.m.

**Attendance:** Catherine Potter, Jeff Yost, Sandy Barron, Joyce Bouchard, Jim Scutt, Joy Salpini, Karen Gritis, Ed Hackett, Annie Schwartz, Nell Hurley, Susan Crawford, Lexi Daché, Bianca Seward, Phyllis Payne, Vicki Chamlee

**I. Welcome**—President Catherine Potter called the meeting to order.

**II. Minutes**—Approved March 2009 meeting’s minutes with one amendment: Nell Hurley had to leave the March meeting before PTSA membership discussion.

**III. Treasurer’s Report**—Sandy Barron—\$6,000 below projections. No other fund-raisers are planned. Cav Cruise is \$30,000 behind fund-raising goal. Treasurer’s report approved.

**IV. New Business**

*A. Bylaws—Catherine Potter*—Need to be revisited every 5 years; will submit to Virginia PTA the amended bylaws, which were printed in the *Chronicle* (mailed to general membership early April) to meet the mandated 30-day comment period. Note: On April 14, VA PTA issued a standard template with certain phrases that must be included in the bylaws verbatim. Should WTW’s amended bylaws be rejected, the old bylaws will remain in effect for 4 months. Then new ones must be submitted.

*B. PTSA Teacher of the Year Nomination—Catherine Potter*—Nominees discussed, and nomination letters handed out for review. Vote on paper ballots, which Treasurer Sandy Barron collected and tabulated. Presentation will be made in May at the Senior Class recognition assembly.

*C. PTSA v. PTO Discussion—Catherine Potter and Nell Hurley*  
WTW PTSA discussed switching to a Parent-Teacher Organization five years earlier (during last bylaws’ review) but did not pursue. PTO has no generalized membership and does have assistance with insurance. Utah and Virginia are the only states with high percentage of PTAs (45 percent). Of 132,000 schools, only 27,000 have PTAs; the rest have PTOs or no organization. Most Northern Virginia schools do have PTAs and PTSAs. Bonnie Brae Elementary shifted to PTO two years ago. Various handouts were distributed with additional information on the issue.

*Reasons to consider switching to PTO:*

1. WTW PTSA sends dues (\$3,000 combined) to county, state, and national PTAs.
2. New bylaws template mandates that the PTSA board must get general membership approval for any changes to the adopted budget greater than \$300.
3. Fairfax County Council PTA (FCCPTA) dictates stances on issues by which all PTSA must abide.\*

4. Monies raised by PTA now support “all aspects of a child’s life,” including house of worship. PTO does not interfere with issues in the home or places of worship. Instead, its mission is to support the local school.

\* Chantilly PTA president is bringing motions to County Council re: bylaws and endorsing issues and organizations that too few people are determining stances to which all the schools will have to adhere.

*Positive aspects of PTA:*

1. is a registered (and recognized) trademark
2. allows for Reflections (arts) contest participation
3. offers some technical assistance
4. can help with outside mediation on some issues

If WTW PTSA switches to a PTO, this organization will have to be in place prior to dissolving the PTSA, as when a PTSA’s charter is rescinded, the assets will be taken by the state and district PTSAs unless the PTSA has previously distributed the assets to another qualified 501(3)© organization.

Phyllis Payne observed: The FCCPTA has value because changed governance process with decision making has been handed to the school superintendent. In issues before the school board, the FCCPTA offers a larger, cohesive voice, which is more important now than ever. If WTW PTSA peels off, it could harm the FCCPTA’s standing.

*Counterpoint:* WTW PTSA pays for the privilege of the FCCPTA and state and national PTAs to use our voice; however, WTW PTSA is not allowed to take a different position on the issues.

On May 2, the Virginia PTA will hold a public hearing and allow members to address proposed legislative and policy statement action items. These actions are all laudable goals, but where do they draw the line?

- Supports increasing funding for government agencies for identifying and prosecuting those who have committed crimes against children. (How will they address the relatively recent phenomenon of “sexting”?)
- “Opposes any constitutional change to reduce local school board authority/responsibility for public school supervision and administration to include mandating a uniform grading scale for all school divisions.” (How would this stance have affected Fairfax County’s parent-led FAIRGRADE effort?)
- Wants all teachers to have fully funded, unencumbered planning time. (Shouldn’t that issue be decided at the school level?)

*Discussion: Point*—Regarding issue with PTA funds supporting “all aspects of child’s life,” including home and places of worship, parent pointed out the PTA must represent all points of view and the entire community. What happens outside of school also influences the students.

*Counter*—If politicians in the FCCPTA or state PTA went against FAIRGRADE, for example, according to the new bylaws, WTW PTSA could not deviate. Initially, the FCCPTA did not support FAIRGRADE, RENEW (WTW renovation), or SLEEP.

*Counter*—Disagree; the FCCPTA did support efforts but has different procedures and agenda. While not in the forefront of supporting such issues, the FCCPTA is changing.

*Point*—High school PTAs spend thousands of dollars, and funding requests arise during the year. Can't run a PTA effectively and get quorums of general membership on financial matters if the \$300 stipulation stands.

*Question*—What about insurance (prices)? Does switching make a difference?

*Acknowledgment*—Because of strict bylaws, PTSA has more control over funds and insurance does help provide protection. PTO insurance prices are comparable, though.

*Point*—One parent said she had been a member of a PTO in the past. Both organizations are credible and are not that much different; however, “money saved is money earned.” (Why send money to other organizations when we need it here?)

*Upshot:* Nell tasked with determining status of county and state PTSAs/PTAs and PTOs for comparison purposes. Catherine will arrange for a speaker from a school that has gone through the process to address the board. Timing is an issue, especially with the FCCPTA because the county is currently discussing important issues, such as FAIRGRADE. Nell suggested Catherine also include a speaker from the district-level PTA for balance and to answer questions.

We will need a special meeting with at least 10 members present to vote on the budget and PTSA issues.

## **V. Principal's Report—Jeff Yost**

*A. Back-to-School Packet*—For the coming school year, the packet of school forms will be mailed to students and will not be at the school for pickup when they come to get their schedules. Only academic materials will be included. Students will still pick up their schedules at the office. The PTSA can have materials (membership, directory forms, volunteer forms, etc.) available at a nearby table as the guidance counselors are distributing schedules to the students.

*B. Destaffing Meeting*—Held earlier in day. Some teachers are retiring, some are taking leaves of absence, and many teachers will be destaffed (i.e., they will go into the county pool and can look for a job elsewhere in the system). Some positions are protected during this process, per county regulations; then the least senior person has to find another position. Will lose 2 custodians, 1 admin assistant. Not planning to cut programs. Although Board of Supervisors will not meet until April 27 to finalize budget, money coming to schools has already been hinted at; thus, April 21, WTW staffing decisions will be made, determining how many teachers will be available for course offerings. Some stand-alone courses have already been cut, others might have to be dropped (per staffing issue), and still others (e.g., some AP courses) might be offered every other year. Changes in course offerings will be noted on school profiles sent to colleges.

Nell Hurley suggestion: to retain language classes, offer a language academy at WTW and admit students from other high schools, where classes might get dropped.

*C. Renovation*—Trailers will leave before graduation. This summer, entire roadway in front of school will be inaccessible. Park by weight room or in Whitacre lot. Auditorium should be open May 1.

*D. Schedule changes to 8-period day*—In 8-period day with seven classes, still need to work out “return” periods, or “learning seminars.” These periods will be reserved for enrichment activities or additional instruction time. Every 8th day, a 35-minute inactive period will allow time for pep rallies, concerts, class meetings, etc.

*E. FAIRGRADE changes*—Discussed in March faculty meeting. The School Board has still not decided all the particulars.

## **VI. Committee Reports**

*A. Cavalier Cruise—Joy Salpini*—Successful kickoff; have 315 reservations. Tickets are \$75 (anyone needing financial assistance may contact the principal.) Yard signs fund-raiser (thanks, Wendy Hecker!) has already covered costs; \$100 ahead now. Download order form from website. Have made \$2,500 in spring flower sales and have received \$650 in donations thus far. Need volunteers to work at the party.

*B. Woodson Coalition*—On April 22, Brandon Silveria will address students in lecture hall, 9:30 and 11:00 a.m.; attendance by teacher choice. Mr. Marr still checking on whether the talk can be distributed by video transmission.

*C. Renovation—Jim Scutt*—1,000 plants to be part of the landscaping around the grounds of Woodson. Fairfax County arborist says trees in front of D Hall will stay as well as the trees in the front of the school. Auditorium’s getting new seats, staging, and floor. Gym floor has been removed, and new awards case has been installed near the main gym. Still need \$800,000 for AstroTurf; on hold. *Note:* Jeff Nelson will replace Mr. Scutt for rest of renovation.

*Per Mr. Yost:* New track and new stadium entrance facade coming this summer. Small, retractable seating for community use going into small gym. In large gym, concrete blocks at retractable door and light fixtures near baskets have been removed. Wrestling will have a center spotlight (donation). Flagpole will move, and drive cut through in front of school will move from auditorium to front office area. Under consideration: (1) marquee issue and (2) an outdoor performance space next to arts wing (would like to dedicate to RENEW). Have ordered 40 6-foot steel benches to place around the school. All come with a plaque space so folks can endow the benches.

*D. Boosters—Maureen Burt*—Sports decals, which can be used to personalize Cav Cruise yard signs, are available from website.

*E. Hospitality—Maureen Burt*—Teacher appreciation lunch is April 30 in Cavalier Hall (10:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m.; 4 shifts). Need volunteers.

## **VII. President’s Report—Catherine Potter**

*A. School Board Superintendent’s Meeting with PTA Presidents*—Dr. Dale said FAIRGRADE grading changes will not be retroactive; however, changes to transcripts will be retroactive for AP “bumps.” Honors courses have not been decided.

*B. Bell Schedule*—May change next year after all because of transportation cost savings. Unlikely that high school and middle school start times will change.

Meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

**Next meeting: May 12, 7:00 p.m., Library.**