



Council of Darien School Parents P.O. Box 2643, Darien, CT 06820

**CDSP General Meeting
February 8, 2024, 10 a.m.
At the Board of Education**

In person: Joanna Walsh, Crystal Hill, Byrne Pozzi, Diane Urban, Jessica Levey, Christina Kreuz, Caitlin Cahill, Libby Cook, Beth Lane, Caroline Jennings, Katie D'Acunto, Cameron Sokolik, Kathy Jabara, Vanessa Donatello, Amy Reid, Griffin Marr.

Meeting called to order by Joanna Walsh at 10:08 a.m.

Vote to approve the minutes from December 7, 2023. Motion to approve by Joanna Walsh. Christina Kreuz, First; Caroline Jennings Second. Passed unanimously.

Vote to approve the minutes from January 11, 2024. Motion to approve by Joanna Walsh. Caitlin Cahill, First; Amy Reid, Second. Passed unanimously.

Co-Chair Updates:

HRH Funding Update: BOF approved the increased funds as have the RTM. Work should begin when school ends but there may be prep work that begins before the end of May. PTO co-chairs should reach out to their building administrator to ask them communicate what next steps are.

If parents are interested in a road show to discuss the project, the PTO's should work with building admin.

Deficit: The projected deficit is now between \$400,000-\$500,000. The projected return from the state is between 67.5% and 71%; the BOE budgeted for 70% return. The BOE will need to approach the town for an appropriation; the exact amount has yet to be determined.

Dr. Dadd Presentations: Every school has hosted one talk, except Holmes has hosted two. Joanna and Crystal have asked the administration to open each meeting to our entire community to provide more schedule options for our parents.

The DEI Equity Report was delivered with considerations and recommendations for the district, at the end of the 2022/2023 school year. Dr. Fedigan has had time to review the proposal and has met twice with the leadership team to review it. The administration will generate action items from this report, in conjunction with the strategic plan and will present these to the BOE in the Spring. Turnover has delayed this process and CDSP has relayed parental frustration over the delays.

The Climate survey is going to be sent to High School and Middle School students in March. CDSP has requested the administration send a detailed email to parents, prior to the students receiving the survey, explaining what it is and why it's being sent. The climate survey is a mandatory state statute sent to better understand each child's experience as a student in his/her community.

Nominating: Reminder that CDSP recommends outside organizations (Girl Scouts, Let me Run, etc) be moved off the slate. You are welcome to assist them or offer suggestions, but your nominating chairs do not need to fill those positions.

Wire Reminders: Organizations must be a 501c3 to be listed in your Wires. If they are new, please take the time to research and confirm their 501c3 status. There is a website to check status, please contact Libby Cook if you are interested in the information. Schools can remove the community section if they prefer.

Officer Updates:

(Special Education):

- There are still inconsistencies in how PPT meeting information is being distributed to parents. There is no language stating that parents have the right to hold meetings in person vs. zoom. Please continue to request that your admin change the language.
- Also, there are several instances of parents not notified of missed services, in a timely manner. Crystal and Joanna have asked the district to create a formal policy addressing this issue. Please also follow up with your individual schools to make sure communication is being disseminated.

Libby Cook (Treasurer):

- No update at this time.

Megan Thornton / Christina Kreutz (Budget):

- There has been a great turnout in letters and public comments at each BOE Meeting; please thank your parents for their support and engagement.
- The final cuts and vote will happen at the next meeting; Tuesday 2/13. This is also the last public comment opportunity to voice support and concerns before the vote.
- If you have parents who aren't comfortable speaking, you can find one speaker and parents who are willing to show up. The presence of parents will be effective.
- There will be information to submit on your Wires and on social media before Feb 13th.
- After Tuesday's meeting the process is as follows:
 - o BOF can approve as is or cut or add budget by a dollar amount (they do not have line item control); if they mandate a cut the budget goes back to the BOE, and Dr. Addley recommends what to cut.
 - o RTM also does not have line-item veto. They can only cut the budget by a dollar amount. If they vote down the budget, the BOE has to use last year's budget.

Caitlin Cahill (Nominating/Special Projects):

- The nominating process will begin with Caitlin asking for a rep from each school. Typically, it's a vice chair who fills the role, but it can be anyone from your executive board. This is a low time commitment position.
- Caitlin emailed everyone in January about the recording capability – from those who have responded there is no structure or consistency among schools. She is investigating the existing set up our Music Department has (an ipod, tripod and youtube for recording services) to see if that's the most effective program.

Byrne Pozzi (Communications):

- Thank you to the chairs for distributing Wire and social media information.

Diane Urban / Carrie Vomacka (DEI):

- Belonging and Identity workshop is a sponsorship opportunity for the PTO's. At your next executive board meeting please discuss the workshop and provide potential dates for each school. This is a FREE EVENT

Dr. Addley stopped in to say hello, answer questions on budget process and thank everyone for their support. Joanna asked if fifth grade parents can join his budget talk at MMS tomorrow at 1pm – he asked that we confirm with the MMS admin that it works for them but he's happy to include them. He offered condolences to the Tokeneke community for the passing of Kathy Shultz, which was an enormous loss for the Darien Community.

School Updates:

Hindley:

- Last week they held their first Bingo Night which was a huge success. Heritage night is coming up on March 21st. Kindness week begins next week & Dance China is visiting on the 13th.
- They have approached Principal Snowden to ask Dr. Addley to come discuss the budget and invite the other elementary schools. Might be better for next year

Holmes:

- Upcoming events include: KidsCare SouperBowl drive, H Factor try outs, Islanders game tomorrow and Teacher treats for Valentine's day.
- Holmes hosted their first Heritage Night and it was a huge success both in representation and attendance.

Ox Ridge:

- Souperbowl event at Bowelro at the same time as Royle; they negotiated together to receive a better deal.
- They have been unable to fill the vice chair role for next year and the vice chairs this year will not be moving up next year so the current co-chairs are staying on for another year. The nominating effort will take place as they simultaneously reorganize the slate and update the bylaws to reflect the new necessary committees. They will also hold a recruitment event in April.

Tokeneke:

- Several events are coming up including the father/child Breakfast of Champions event on Sunday with Grit Ninja, Kindness week and Passport night in April.
- Everyone wanted to say thank you for reaching out about Kathy. There will be a memorial held on March 3rd.

Royle:

- Several events are coming up including the Royle acts of kindness week, the Islanders Game, Superbowling at Bowlero (father/child event).
- The Care club held a valentine craft for children to send to the domestic violence crisis center; it was well attended.
- Nominating will begin with a large parent meeting in March; this is the second year the PTO is hosting this event as last year's meeting was successful.

MMS:

- No updates at this time.

DHS:

- The nominating process has begun and simultaneously the exec board is reconfiguring executive board positions. Trouble filling the vice chair position for 2024/2025 so the co-chairs are staying for a second year.
 - o Joanna has suggested adding the special Ed rep to the executive board.

New Business:

Teacher appreciation week: please send a contact name and email from each school so that Joanna and Crystal can assist in streamlining and enhancing the week.

Motion to adjourn by Joanna Walsh at 11:21am. Libby Cook first; Beth Lane, Second. Passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by Jessica Levey, CDSP Secretary.