

PTO Board Meeting Minutes

September 16, 2026

Meeting Type	PTO General Meeting and Executive Board Meeting (hybrid)
Purpose	General PTO business, school and event updates, 2026-27 budget and bylaws review, communication and volunteer planning, community questions, and Executive Board votes.

Attendance

Krista Karwosky, Co-President	Sonal Selvaraj, Special Education Teacher
James Qi, Co-President	Courtney Copper, Dance Teacher
E.J. Yu, Co-Secretary	Aisha Stroop, Parent
Sachin Gianchandani, Co-Treasurer	Brande Phillips Quarshie, Parent
Enton Nikaj, Co-Treasurer	Dana Gubitosa, Parent
Christine Flynn, Events Facilitator	Dipika Khushalani, Parent
Emily Lato, Communications Facilitator	Erin Lally, Parent
Akash Sadhu, Tech Facilitator	Giorgia Gargano, Parent
Bree Coombs, Fundraising Facilitator/Grade 3 Teacher	Giulia Gabrielli, Parent
Carolyn Roth, Fundraising Facilitator	Grace Hamilton, Parent
Naomi Montenegro, Volunteer Facilitator	Ian Power, Parent
Sandy Kennedy, Early Release Movie Coordinator	Jacalyn Pruitt, Parent
Reina Di Nino, Green Team	Karan Punjabi, Parent
Sarah Adams, Green Team	Marilynn Munsch, Parent
Emily Guttman, VOSH	Marissa Gronopillo, Parent
Susan Fissell, Book Fair Chair	Muriel Liggins, Parent
Kim DiMondo, PTC Delegate/Immediate Past President	Nicole DeSalvo, Parent
Frank Rodriguez, Principal	Robert Robinson, Parent
Jeff Bianco, Asst. Principal	Sagar Singhi, Parent
Dr. Reina Costanzo, Asst. Principal	Said Sarih, Parent
Nicole Bronson, K Teacher	Sandra Lunarejo, Parent
Sarah Taylor, Grade 1 Teacher	Shibani Kapur, Parent
Melinda Kinder, Grade 2 Teacher	Tichianaa Armah, Parent
Rachel Cuesta, Grade 2 Teacher	Vanessa W, Parent
Jesy Clark, Grade 3 Teacher	Vineet Kapoor, Parent
Maggie Fritz, Grade 3 Teacher	Yessica Rosario, Parent
	Yuktha Nalla, Parent

1. Call to Order and Opening Business

- The first general PTO meeting of the 2026-27 school year was called to order following a motion by Krista. Sandy seconded the motion at 7:04 PM.
- Leadership clarified that the proposed 2026-27 budget and bylaws were being presented to the general membership for discussion only. Under the bylaws, they must be distributed at least 10 days before the general membership votes; that vote is planned for October. The Executive Board would consider both items later in the meeting.

2. Administration Update

- The district magnet-school lottery opened September 15 and will remain open through January 15. Families seeking placement for incoming siblings or other new students must submit a lottery application. An information session will be offered for prospective families.
- Planning is underway for the Patches extended-school-hours program, generally serving kindergarten through Grade 3 and possibly Grade 4. The grant requires a community partner. Fall and spring sessions are anticipated.

- Families were reminded that outside food-delivery orders are not permitted during the school day. Students who need a school lunch should place the order in the morning so the cafeteria can prepare accurate quantities. Administration is reviewing a significant mismatch between morning lunch orders and lunchtime demand, particularly in Grade 8.
- The PYP Open House is scheduled for September 24.
- The school cell-phone policy is being enforced consistently. Phones, smartwatches, earbuds, and similar devices should not be visible or used during the school day; repeated violations result in progressively stronger consequences and parent follow-up.
- The student ambassador program is working well during morning arrival.
- The school is exploring an MYP assembly with local artist and motivational speaker Five Fingaz, potentially paired with a mural in the school foyer.
- Hispanic Heritage Month activities are beginning, with plans to recognize and celebrate Hispanic culture throughout the school community.

3. Volunteer Opportunities and Upcoming Events

- The PTO is launching MYP grade-level parent representatives, similar to PYP room parents. Interested families were encouraged to contact the PTO.
- Friday Night Lights was sold out, and the PYP Outdoor Movie Night was scheduled for the following week. October events include Trunk or Treat and the Grade 5-6 Monster Mash.
- Event leadership remains a significant need. The PTO is seeking a co-events facilitator, coordinators for Trunk or Treat and Monster Mash, and additional support for early-release movie days.
- Board members emphasized that templates and prior-year materials already exist for many events, so volunteers will receive support rather than starting from scratch.
- Leadership noted that future event planning will be matched to available volunteer capacity; some events may be reduced or postponed if sufficient help is not available.
- Members emphasized that PTO programs rely on the combined volunteer efforts of parents, teachers, staff, and administrators.

4. 2026-27 Budget Review

- The budget was presented as the PTO's operating framework and a statement of priorities. It will be distributed to the general membership before the October vote.
- The PTO begins the year with nearly \$77,000 in the bank. More than \$14,000 is earmarked for grade-level accounts, leaving approximately \$58,000 to \$59,000 in general PTO reserves.
- Leadership intends to maintain a reserve of roughly one year or more of operating expenses. The projected year-end general balance is approximately \$58,900, with additional grade-level funds expected to remain with their respective classes.
- Pioneer Players is budgeted at approximately \$15,000 of income and \$15,000 of expense and is expected to operate approximately budget-neutral.
- Approximately \$16,200 is budgeted for grade-level activities, or about \$1,800 per grade, to help offset transportation, admission, and other field-trip costs. Carryover funds remain with each class and can help reduce larger expenses in Grades 5 and 8.
- Giving-back expenses include graduation support, staff hospitality, and \$2,000 for Helping Hands. PTO operating expenses are a little over \$4,500 and include software, licensing, incidentals, and PTC dues.
- Social events are intended to remain approximately cost-neutral so participation can be kept affordable rather than used primarily as fundraisers.
- Grade-level leaders and administrators worked with the PTO to develop more detailed activity budgets. The PTO plans to communicate total activity costs, PTO support, grade-level carryovers, and the amount requested from families, with flexibility to spread payments over time when needed.
- Total field-trip costs were described as more than \$140,000, with more than \$200,000 flowing through the PTO annually. Major fundraising sources include the Strawberry Dash, the book fair, Slice, outside-family contributions, and employer matching gifts. Strawberry Dash income was forecast at more than \$26,000.

5. Bylaws Review

- Proposed bylaw revisions were reviewed for the general membership. Leadership described the changes as primarily updates for continuity, current terminology, and existing practices.
- Officer language is being revised to support alternating junior/senior terms where applicable, helping maintain continuity between outgoing and incoming leaders.
- The secretary role now includes responsibility for supporting the biweekly calendar, and the Executive Board is expected to meet in person at least twice when permissible.
- Terminology updates include changing the former DEI Committee name to Voices of Strawberry Hill (VOSH) and updating the drama committee reference to Pioneer Players.
- The Funds Disbursement Committee is proposed for removal because it has not been used in recent years and current budgeting and board authority provide other ways to address needs.
- The PTO will need members for the nominating committee and continues to recruit volunteers for open board and committee roles.
- The proposed bylaws will be circulated to the membership and brought forward for a general vote in October.

6. PTO Communication and Engagement

- Leadership reiterated that improved communication is a central PTO goal for the year, including communication within the board, from the PTO to families, and from families back to the PTO.
- ParentSquare provides a more consistent schoolwide communication channel. The PTO also now uses StrawberryHillPTO.org and related email addresses to make PTO information easier to find and preserve from year to year.
- Meeting signs around the school were cited as an example of reaching families beyond email and social media, especially newer kindergarten families.
- A parent suggested restoring the ability to add important PTO dates directly to personal calendars. Leadership agreed to investigate the issue and discussed creating brief video or screen-recorded tutorials for calendar setup, event registration, and other common tasks.
- The school staff roster is available online. A suggestion was made to add grade levels and assignments to the existing roster information.
- Membership Toolkit remains the PTO's core system for PTO emails, event access, directories, and family records. Families were reminded to keep their records and student grade levels current.

7. Community Questions and Discussion

- Members discussed school-lunch ordering and menu consistency. Possible reasons for unplanned lunchtime demand include menu changes, students changing their minds, and students with home lunches deciding to purchase school lunch.
- Questions were raised about the difference in lunch pricing for younger and older students and whether older students receive larger portions. Administration will continue to follow up with cafeteria and district staff on pricing, portion sizes, menu substitutions, and ordering procedures.
- A known Parent Portal app issue has been reported to the district and PowerSchool. The browser version remains available while the app issue is being addressed; no resolution date was available at the meeting.
- The Green Team requested a stronger digital archive and more opportunities for parent and student involvement.
- Reina noted that Strawberry Hill is a Greenleaf school and offered to help connect science teachers with Greenleaf and UConn lesson resources.
- A kindergarten parent Vineet volunteered to become more involved with the PTO, reinforcing the meeting's broader emphasis on parent participation and community-building.

The general meeting was closed following a motion and a second by Sachin at 8:19 PM.

8. Executive Board Session

- The Executive Board session was opened following a motion and a second by Kim at 8:21 PM.
- **The Executive Board approved the proposed 2026-27 Strawberry Hill PTO budget unanimously**, with no objections or abstentions recorded. The budget will still be presented to the general membership for the required October vote.
- **The Executive Board approved the proposed 2026 bylaws unanimously**, with no objections or abstentions recorded. Enton seconded the bylaws motion. The bylaws will also be presented to the general membership for the October vote.
- The Board discussed whether the PTO fiscal year should remain September 1-August 31 or be changed to July 1-June 30. An earlier fiscal-year transition could simplify budgeting, website and system turnover, roster updates, and early-school-year event payments.
- Families were reminded to update Membership Toolkit records, especially student grade levels and contact information, because access to grade-specific events depends on accurate records.

9. Action Items

Owner	Action
Frank Rodriguez / Administration	Follow up with cafeteria and district staff on lunch-ordering patterns, menu substitutions, portion sizes, and grade-based pricing; communicate clarifications to families.
PTO Leadership	Distribute the proposed 2026-27 budget and bylaws to the general membership at least 10 days before the October vote.
PTO Leadership / Communications	Investigate calendar-subscription functionality and create brief how-to guidance or videos for common PTO tools and event-registration processes.
Naomi Montenegro / PTO Leadership	Continue recruiting MYP grade-level parent representatives.
Christine Flynn / Events Team	Recruit a co-events facilitator and event leads/support for Trunk or Treat, Monster Mash, and early-release movie days.
Jeff Bianco / Administration	Update the online staff roster with grade levels/assignments as appropriate and share Parent Portal app updates when available.
Reina Di Nino / Green Team / Communications	Share Green Team history, photos, and program information for PTO communications and explore a dedicated digital hub/email and greater student participation.
Treasury / Executive Board	Review the implications of changing the PTO fiscal year from September 1-August 31 to July 1-June 30.
Parents / Families	Review and update Membership Toolkit records, including student grade levels and current contact information.

10. Adjournment

- A motion was made to close the Executive Board session and was seconded by Christine Flynn. No objections were recorded, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:29 PM.