

Minutes of the Wellesley POPS General Board Meeting
March 17, 2015

In attendance:

Alison Madden, Sue Kinney, Joy Breuer, Stephanie Hawkinson, Marguerite Chatelier, Darlene Howland, Sharon Lowe, Ron Alexander, Michael Scholl, Helen Hamel, Sandra Nicolucci, Julia Miwa, Michael Scholl

Minutes of the last meeting were MOVED, SECONDED, and APPROVED.

Michael circulated his treasurer's report and informed us of some minor corrections. Our actual donations for this year are down from previous years and from our budget for this year. We have talked about improving our web presence and improving our email outreach, now that we've gone paperless.

Sharon is going to look into getting a new logo designed to provide consistent branding and a better appearance. Michael has still not received our refund check from Holly's cleaners.

Michael highlighted some upcoming expenses and income. We discussed whether there is usually a fee waiver for students who cannot afford the Performing Arts Banquet. There is.

Sandi mentioned that there was a huge audience for the high school step up concert but there was nobody there collecting POPS donations at that event. We discussed the circumstances that led to that – there was a plan in place, but it fell through.

Michael reported that whenever we set up an online sale via the store, a confirmation email for each purchase goes to Wellesley POPS. People include the size info in the comments if it is a clothing item (t-shirt). Michael uses these emails to set up a spreadsheet of who has paid for things. For some reason, Michael did not receive a bunch of these emails, and it was time- and labor-intensive to recreate the list of people who had paid. As a result, he thinks we should look into a different host for our store. Darlene said that parents have reported that even with the various technical issues, everyone prefers the online payment system. It seems like it would be worthwhile to spend a little money to upgrade to a better system. We all agreed that this would be a good idea and a high priority for POPS.

Michael also reported that the renewal for the PO Box was missed and a bunch of mail was returned, but that has all been taken care of and we still have the same box number.

There have also been issues with Formal Fashions, which provides the concert attire. They have been sending emails to Dr. Mac and/or to parent volunteers, and we were incurring finance charges for late bills. Michael has straightened that all out.

It was MOVED, SECONDED, and VOTED to approve the treasurer's report.

Darlene Howland, High School Drama Rep, reported on the very successful winter play, Bildungsroman. The show was a challenge due to snow days and the particular creative process for this show, but publicity was completed in time and the show has been doing well. The show was performed at a festival last weekend and won several awards. Sue Kinney will be getting the specifics on this for publicity. Wellesley is hosting a festival this Sunday; the biggest challenge has been finding the required medical professional to come in. Allison will contact the head of nursing for the schools in order to determine the exact requirements and provide some leads. It was mentioned that the schools should really cover this, as the budget for the trainers who are present for athletic events does not come from the parent support group but from the schools.

Darlene recapped some of the preparations for the festival – food, etc. Darlene has secured a sponsor for the festival – Wellesley Gentlemen's Society.

Coming up for high school drama, there are two productions happening: a small-scale musical "20th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee" in May and the play "The Comedy of Errors" in June. Lizzie Mears is going to NYC to represent Massachusetts in the National Shakespeare Competition. There has been some great publicity for that.

The dates for Spelling Bee are May 8 and 9.
Comedy of Errors is June 4 and 6.

Carl Richardson's one act play won an award at a Drama competition at Emerson.

All award information should go to Allison for the end-of-year banquet, but that should come from the teachers, not us.

Darlene said that Brian McManimon, who is a 0.4 FTE employee, has done such great things with the kids this year. He has worked way beyond his 0.4, and a request has been put in to add 0.3 to his job to get him to 0.7 FTE and eligible for benefits. Sandi described him as a "resident genius" on par with Chad Wierick. He is currently juggling two shows at the same time (WMS musical and winter play). He has introduced a new projection system that adds much to our productions, and he is teaching the kids to use this for backdrops. Darlene commented on how responsive he is whenever she needs information or assistance. It is hoped that he may be able to offer classes in stagecraft sometimes as part of his 0.7 FTE, although most of the increase is really to compensate him for things he is already doing. Sandi said that support from the central administration for increasing his time is high.

Sharon added that Brian's technical support is vital to the successful running of the annual Town Meeting.

We are encouraged to pay attention to the budgeting process and show our support for his work and for his continued/expanded employment in the school system.

Sandi reported that we are in the final stages of selecting a new performing arts director. Two finalists were interviewed yesterday in a very extensive day-long process. She expects that Dr. Lussier will make a decision soon. The performing arts faculty/staff has had a chance to give their input.

Dance Program: Project Moves comes up next week. Janet has been working tirelessly on this one performance. Our fear is that no one will come to it. POPs and others have been publicizing it a lot. The performance is free but those attending need tickets ahead of time. Efforts have been made to get the word out to local dance studios. The show is recommended for middle school and high school students, not young children. Darlene suggested a small flyer to be distributed at the festival on Sunday. There is also a plan to publicize it at the Little Mermaid performances.

For the WMS Musical, The Little Mermaid, \$2 per ticket will be donated to the Be Like Brit Foundation. The Be Like Brit Foundation has built an orphanage in Haiti in memory of Britney Gengel, who was killed in the Haiti earthquake.

Sandi would like to get the entire Performing Arts calendar for next year set by the beginning of June. She will be inviting selected POPS reps to a meeting to set the calendar and avoid conflicts with things like PSATs, SATs, cotillion, etc. The meeting is expected to be May 6. This way we'll have everything set and the spaces reserved before other requests come in. There will be five parent reps, covering a variety of ages and activities to provide information. Sandi is trying to ensure that Performing Arts gets first dibs on the spaces that we use.

Sharon reviewed our grant process. Last year we had some surplus funds due to a specific situation, but this year is more normal in terms of our ability to fund things. Some of the requests we get are also put in for WEF funding. We are waiting to see what WEF does before determining what we will fund, but we're looking at two tenor saxophones for WMS and music stands for the elementary schools. If money remains, we might be able to support publicity for the Project Moves and Footnotes performances.

Sue Kinney gave the publicity report. Our efforts are multimedia now, and overall we have a stronger presence than we have had in the past. Sue is trying to coordinate and systematize things so that the media outlets know what to expect and when, and to make sure there isn't duplication of effort. We are working well with The Bradford, using student writers. We have some parents who are good writers and we are looking for more. It's a very large effort and a very busy job.

Sue's goal for next year is to have a committee. She would like to have a PR rep for the elementary schools and one for the middle school. There have been some issues this year with certain events and certain parents doing things on their own rather than working through POPS. Sue emphasized that we are not control freaks and not trying to constrain people – just trying to facilitate things and keep things consistent. We have a great presence in the Townsman now and are responsible for large amounts of their content.

There was a substantial article about the senior districts music festival, and there is one upcoming about junior districts. The Townsman likes to do promotion before events, and the Hometown Weekly likes to do recaps of events, so it works very well.

Our Facebook presence is going very well, too. There is an article about the WMS Brooks Brothers on our page. There were WMS students performing with the Wellesley Symphony this past weekend. Sue will be collecting info on that and publicizing it.

Stephanie has been working with the local tv channel; the most recent effort is a promotional video for the Project Moves performance. Sue described some other upcoming publicity efforts.

Our twitter feed is @WellesleyPOPS

Sue encouraged us to keep her informed if there are things that we think should be covered. She mentioned that the newspapers prefer to cover things that will bring in an audience that includes the community, not just parents. Sandi said that during less busy times, it might be nice to profile certain longtime teachers.

Sue closed by encouraging everyone to follow POPS on social media and tell others to do so.

Sharon described the Performing Arts Banquet, which is a fairly large high school event to recognize the high school participants and have a send-off for our seniors. A few more volunteers are needed to join Helen on the planning committee. The date of the banquet is May 20.

It will soon be time to think about next year's budget. Sharon will work with Michael to generate a form that people can submit for their expected budget. We will also soon need a nominating committee to fill vacancies and new positions for next year.

We need to add a fundraising chair for next year.

This prompted a discussion of some additional fundraising ideas. Sandi would like to include a POPS donation page/ad in the programs for our events. She also asked

whether we have layered levels of donors; we do not. Michael suggested that we provide special seating for certain events for major donors.

It was suggested that the ad say “if you like what you see and like what you hear, it’s because Wellesley POPS bought the wireless microphones for this show; please support us.”

Sandi thanked us all for our efforts.

It was MOVED, SECONDED, and VOTED to adjourn.