

MINUTES OF OCTOBER 4, 2007

PARENT COUNCIL MEETING

In attendance:

William Dennett, William Powers, Pamela Glasser, Jason Wainio, Jeanne Bayer Roy, Beth Coyne, Stephanie Purcell-Setaro, Sarah Chadderton, Sheila Salkin, Peggy Steiner, Julie Cashman, Clo Davis, Renee Smith, Susan Cayer Stout, Heidi Presto, Lowri Foyle, Dyanna Rudden, Roberta Lombardi, Jen McNiff, Lisa Miller, Susan Luchini, Joanne Arrandale, Suzette Bovolack, Nancy Lorenze, Kathleen Zane, Tracy Rams, Fran Ginsberg, Christine Deman, Lynn Haversat, Emily Phillips, Sandy Singewald, Janet Gochberg, Heidi Worcester, Kathy Weathers, Liz Lightfoot, Laurie Fasano, Marjorie Dorr, Lynne Hubbard, Erin Neviasser

Parent Council Executive Committee President Sarah Chadderton called the meeting to order at 8:40AM.

Ms. Chadderton introduced the other members of the Executive Committee present, as well as Jason Wainio.

Mr. Wainio introduced himself to the Parent Council members present, reviewed his twelve-year tenure at TCS for the group, and noted that his new responsibilities include Director of Admissions and Secondary School Liaison. Mr. Wainio reminded all present of the upcoming Open House, scheduled for October 17, 2007, and encouraged the audience to spread the good word about TCS to friends and neighbors. Mr. Wainio excused himself from the meeting several minutes later to meet with a representative from The Williston Northampton School.

Ms. Chadderton provided an overview of the mission of Parent Council, of which every parent at the school is automatically a member. She explained that the Parent Council exists to support the school, coordinate school activities, assist with events and fundraising, and serve as a conduit for communication between parents and the TCS community. Ms. Chadderton went on to explain that all upcoming Parent Council sponsored events will be advertised in the Little Hoot, with some additional information forthcoming from time to time via email and/or backpack communication. There will be a Parent Council telephone extension this year. The number is 421-3113 ext. 404. All comments and suggestions are welcomed.

Ms. Chadderton introduced William Powers, Head of School. Mr. Powers immediately introduced William Dennett, Chairperson of The Board of Directors of The Country School. Mr. Powers explained that Mr. Dennett is the former Director of Admissions at Choate, and has had a long career in admissions and development. He is currently associated with the Westport firm of Sternbrecker & Associates.

Mr. Dennett took the floor, and explained that this school year will mark his sixth year on The Country School Board. During his tenure on the board he noted that TCS has changed, evolved and grown. As a member of the Board who never had a child at Country, he brings to the Board the perspective of a boarding school administrative liaison, and noted that TCS is moving on a positive and upward trend. He encouraged all members of the Parent Council to be active, involved energetic and enthusiastic, and to communicate often as a group and with TCS' administration. He reinforced the board's desire to know parents' concerns. Mr. Dennett noted that, when he joined the board six years ago, its members totaled twenty-six or twenty-eight; the Board is now comprised of thirteen lively, focused, energetic members. Mr. Dennett introduced Board members Marjorie Dorr and Susan Cayer Stout, both of whom are serving in their second year on TCS' Board, as well as Liz Lightfoot, a former trustee. Mr. Dennett explained that the Board is responsible for the oversight of The Country School. The Board does want to hear parents' concerns about governance issues. Mr. Dennett stressed the essential nature of communication.

Clo Davis asked Mr. Dennett to elaborate on the top objectives of the Board. Mr. Dennett responded that, first, the trustees are focused on TCS' fiscal well being. He explained the importance of a balanced budget in ensuring that the staff has what it needs to maintain TCS as the best PK-8 school in the Shoreline and Southeast regions, and stressed that this is the overarching mission of The Country School. Mr. Dennett further commented that the Board has certain priorities in mind,

namely: physical plant maintenance, update, and rehabilitation; improved communication among all parties retention and attraction of exceptional faculty; and long range planning to articulate and achieve its mission.

Ms. Davis further inquired about the regularity of communication between the Board and parents. Mr. Dennett noted that the Annual Meeting of the Corporation takes place in the spring of each school year, and encouraged parents to attend in greater numbers.

Susan Cayer Stout, speaking as a member of the Development Committee, noted that Development is one important component to ensure the future health and viability of The Country School, and noted that the Annual Fund mailing has gone out from campus this week.

Mr. Powers mentioned that Board members would be happy to meet with the Parent Council again during the year, thanked Mr. Dennett for joining us, and explained that Mr. Dennett was unable to stay longer due to a business commitment in Manhattan.

Mr. Powers spoke briefly about the Outdoor Education Program at TCS, an area emphasized by the Board of Trustees for this year. Mr. Powers described the Outdoor Education initiatives as part of the mission and fabric of The Country School. Mr. Powers explained that TCS has enhanced the Outdoor Education Program this year already, by including this year's fifth grade class in a fall program. While the middle schoolers were off on their fall adventures, the fifth graders ventured out to TCS' blue trail to do trail maintenance, then returned to campus in the afternoon for games on the field. This was followed the next day by a class outing to Chatfield Hollow. All programs were enjoyed greatly.

Ms. Chadderton introduced Janet Gochberg, who chaired this year's Judge's Perennial Sale at the home of Mik and Matt Griswold. The event, which raised a record \$8100, was a tremendous success, and heartfelt thanks were extended to the Griswolds for opening their home and beautiful property to the TCS community. Proceeds from this year's event will support the Outdoor Education Program.

Ms. Gochberg made mention of the Mountain Workshop website (www.mountainworkshop.com), and encouraged parents to explore the website, as it contains programs for adults and families, as well as those with which we are familiar through our children.

Clo Davis, a second year parent at TCS and the mother of Gabriel, grade 6, spoke about the upcoming Scholastic Book Fair, scheduled for October 17-19 in the library. The hours of the fair will be as follows: October 17 and 18: 7:45AM to 4:30PM, and October 19: 7:45AM to 2PM, followed immediately by pack-up of the Book Fair so that the library can be back in use first thing Monday morning. A handout was distributed requesting volunteers in two hour shifts, including set-up on October 16 at 3:15 and clean-up on the 19th. Two important elements of this fall's Book Fair will be the Birthday Book Club, where parent can purchase books for donation to the library in acknowledgement of their child/ren's birthday/s, and the Teacher Wish List, which enables parents to purchase books desired by their child/ren's teacher/s. Please contact Clo with any questions at closandra@aol.com

Sheila Salkin spoke for Carolyn Rambus about TCS' Community Service program. On Saturday and Sunday, October 13 and 14, TCS will be at Bishop's Orchards as a middle school service committee initiative, helping to make scarecrows. Teachers from TCS will be present, and Sarah Wagner, a seventh grade member of the service committee, will be putting sign-up sheets across campus to solicit volunteers. This same request will also be published in the Little Hoot. Proceeds from this event will be donated to the Community Dining Room in Branford. Ms. Salkin also spoke about the upcoming Thanksgiving Pie Sale, details of which will also be distributed in the Little Hoot and through backpack express. Pies for Thanksgiving can be pre-ordered, for delivery on the Tuesday before Thanksgiving. The pies will be purchased through Bishop's Orchards and, Ms. Salkin explained, will be available not only for purchase by TCS families but also for donation to the Community Dining Room in Branford.

Kathleen Zane spoke about the Holiday Boutique, scheduled for November 28-30. This year the opening reception will take place on November 28 from 6-9PM. On November 29 and 30, the

Boutique's hours will be from 11AM to 4PM, allowing vendors time before the Boutique to open their own shops. The Boutique will be a gathering in our gym of shoreline area merchants, as well as members of the Country School community who may wish to offer handmade items for sale. To date several vendors have committed to the event, including Lulu's of Guilford, and Silver Moon, Ciao Bella, and Maggie's of Madison. Ms. Zane encouraged Parent Council member who may know of a merchant who might be interested in participating to contact her or Susan Weber, Co-Chair. A volunteer sheet was distributed for the Holiday Boutique, as well, as help is needed with publicity, set-up, checkout, staffing for the Parent Council school store, and clean up.

Ms. Zane noted that TCS will be advertising for this event in publications along the shoreline, as it is the co=chairs' aim to open this event up to the larger community. Each vendor will pay \$25.00 to exhibit their merchandise, a fee that will help the Parent Council to offset its expenses for the event, and will donate 20% of proceeds to TCS. A formal letter will be available shortly for distribution to each interested merchant.

Marjorie Dorr asked Pamela Glasser, Lower School Head, to discuss some of the initiatives in process for the lower school. Ms. Glasser noted that, in addition to ongoing curriculum review and enhancement across disciplines, the Lower School has broadened its extracurriculars this year, introducing intramural soccer to the third and fourth grades this Fall, to be followed by intramural basketball for the fourth and fifth graders in the winter months. These programs dovetail nicely into the middle school interscholastic sports program, in which every child may participate without tryout. Our own PE teachers run the intramurals program, and it has been met with great enthusiasm this fall to date. Ms. Glasser also provided an overview of the new Arts in the Afternoon program where, for a small fee for materials, the children are exposed to a variety of art media after school. All present were able to enjoy some examples of this program's work, currently on display in the cafeteria. Ms. Glasser also mentioned the new Homework Haven program, a middle school initiative, where students can enjoy supervised study time after the official school day.

Ms. Chadderton thanked Fran Ginsberg and Marye Wagner, seventh grade room parents, for providing refreshments for this meeting. (Please note that a refreshment schedule for future Parent Council meetings follows these minutes.) She announced that our next Parent Council meeting will take place in the gymnasium on Thursday, November 29 as part of the Holiday Boutique, giving parents a relaxing venue for holiday cheer and shopping.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 AM.

Peggy P. Steiner
Secretary

Refreshment schedule for Parent Council meetings:

November 29 - 5th and 6th grades

February (date TBA) - 4th grade

April 3 - 2nd and 3rd grades

June 5 - Pre-K and Kindergarten