

Muraco Elementary School Parents Association
Meeting Minutes
November 17, 2010

Approvals

- The October MESPA meeting minutes and the 2010-2011 budget were approved.

Direct Appeal Update

- As of November 29th, MESPA has raised a total of \$17,805 from 139 families. There are 346 families in Muraco, so that is a 40% participation rate. Families can continue to donate at any time throughout the year.
- Many corporations have a matching gift program, whereby they will match the charitable contributions that their employees make. Companies that have a matching gift program include Fidelity, State Street, Novartis, Oracle, Wellington, GMO, Wells Fargo and Verizon. If you work for one of these companies, or another company with a similar program, please consider initiating a matching gift!

Announcements

- MESPA is looking for a volunteer to help with the budget and accounting for the Muraco After School Programs (i.e., Super Sports, Games & More, Readers Theater, etc.). The time commitment would require spending a couple of hours over the course of a couple of months. It is very flexible. If you are interested, please follow up with Jennifer Wilson at jsamswils@aol.com.

November MESPA Committee Updates

Community Schools Association (Submitted by Amanda Lewis)

Leland Faulkner and his "World of Wonder" act came to Muraco on Nov. 4 and wowed the kids and faculty! Everyone enjoyed his amazing hand-shadows, storytelling, and Japanese paper butterflies. The next CSA event will be Authorfest on April 14. CSA (Community Schools Association) is made up of representatives from each of the schools and MESPA, like all the schools, contributes dues that fund the two annual programs (Fall event and Authorfest).

Grants (Submitted by Jodi Cranston)

Jodi Cranston attended the November 4th staff meeting and discussed both the process of applying for grants as well as grant opportunities with deadlines in December and January. If any committee is interested in finding sources of additional funding, please contact her at cranston@bu.edu. Ideas include programs not funded by the annual budget and ideas for new programs and projects.

November School Committee (Submitted by Chris Nixon)

Major School Project News from Fall Town Meeting

- a) *Lynch Roof Replacement [TM Article 14]*: On November 8th, TMM approved the funding of the Lynch Roof Replacement Project. This much-needed

\$1.4M project includes the complete replacement of Lynch's remaining low-pitched roof scope as well as masonry repairs and limited replacement of upper clerestory windows. This is the third of three MSBA-funded current Winchester projects, with an estimated \$494,000 in reimbursement to be returned to the Building Stabilization Fund. The MSBA Board will formalize its participation with a vote on Wednesday, 11/17.

- *b) WHS Feasibility Study [TM Article 13]:* In May Winchester was invited by the MSBA to participate in the WHS Feasibility Study process. Should Town Meeting approve funding of the study (2/3 vote) on Thursday, November 18, we are eligible for up to 33% reimbursement from the Commonwealth. Just like the Lynch roof, rebates from the MSBA would be returned to the Stabilization Fund.

- *c) The New Vinson-Owen [TM Article 12]:* The MSBA Executive Board will also be voting on Wednesday, November 17 to approve the V-O project. The next day, Town Meeting will be voting to appropriate and borrow the necessary funds, authorizing a debt exclusion override on Tuesday, January. While we are awaiting the final decision and cost confirmation from the MSBA Board on 11/17, the Town's net cost for the project will be approximately \$17.9M. Some of the key questions and answers include:

- **Why is a new Vinson-Owen important if my kids go to Muraco?**

Parents and taxpayers need to understand that the new V-O project is not "a V-O solution for a V-O problem", but rather, a critical component of a town-wide redistricting strategy. The plan is for the current school -- in poor physical condition and years older than Muraco -- which now enrolls 290 K-5 students to be demolished and replaced by a new energy-efficient facility that has all the key space program components and flexibility to accommodate educational needs well into the future, and to do so while accommodating 420 students with the potential capacity to expand to 480. An increased enrollment capacity at a new V-O will permit the School Committee to redistrict, alleviating significant and prolonged overcrowding at several of our schools, including Muraco (Muraco is not alone in losing computer labs, reading rooms, music rooms, etc.), and addressing our continued double-digit K-5 enrollment increases. Note: The Superintendent has made all V-O design and planning documents available online. For anyone interested, please visit:

<http://mail.winchester.k12.ma.us/~wps/vo%20documents/vo>

- **When will the redistricting discussion begin?...Have I missed anything already?**

"Soon" and "No." At its November 16th meeting, the School Committee discussed the redistricting that is part of the town's plan to alleviate overcrowding at the elementary level. The town last redistricted five years ago. Redistricting will be a lengthy public and transparent process, with the goal of completing the process by Fall 2013, when the new V-O is scheduled to open. Although it is still some time before the process will begin, there will be a redistricting committee to assist the School Committee and parents who are interested in serving on the committee should contact Chris Nixon.

- **"If Article 12 fails to pass and/or the override fails on January 11, will we still redistrict?"**

Redistricting will be necessary regardless of the outcome of Article 12 or 1.11.11, given our enrollment growth and corresponding space shortages.

Operating Budget News

- **Collective Bargaining:** Since our last MESPA meeting we have reached agreement with our other bargaining units. At the request of the Personnel Board, our warrant article for funding all three agreements has been postponed to 11/18, when TM will reconvene. All three unions have accepted 3-year agreements (ending after the 2012-13 school year) providing for a wage increase of 3.95% total over three years (not annually), and also includes two significant agreements: 1) accepting healthcare plan design changes and 2) agreement to move towards a consistent and increased share of healthcare premium costs by the end of year three (25% employee / 75% Town).
- **FY12 Budget:** The due date for principals' FY12 budget requests is Friday, November 19. The School Committee will be hearing from School Principals and WPS Directors beginning on December 7 at 6PM in the first of numerous rounds of FY12 budget development discussions. Check the WPS website for updates, but -- as of this update -- there are budget sessions currently scheduled for: 12/7, 12/8, 12/14, 12/21 (Superintendent's Recommended FY12 Budget), 1/4, 1/10 (Public Hearing, with 1/13 for Snow Date). Note that the SC is scheduled to vote the FY12 budget on 1/10.

Anti-Bullying legislation and policy

- Last month the SC adopted a new anti-bullying policy driven by Beacon Hill legislative requirements. While Winchester Public Schools was required to adopt the policy in an expedited manner, the Superintendent is establishing a task force to review the language, our own district needs and expectations, and to clarify or better define numerous attributes of the new policy. If parents have questions or concerns about the policy and/or would like to know more about the task force, please let Chris Nixon know. The School Committee expects to be revisiting this issue in the spring.

Enrollment Update

The October 1 numbers are in (the ones that the Dept. of Ed uses). Overall, the district's K-5 enrollment is up 3% over last year, from 2051 students on 10/1/09 to 2113 last month. The breakdown by elementary schools:

- Ambrose: 500 (up 4.4%)
- Lincoln: 469 (up 4.5%)
- Lynch: 377 (up 3.9%)
- Muraco: 466 (down 1.3%)
- Vinson-Owen: 301 (up 4.9%)
- Total: 2,113 (up 3.0%)

- * Feel free to contact Chris Nixon by phone or email with questions. For

School Committee questions or issues only, please use: nixon01890@gmail.com.
You can also contact Christa Russo at richard.russo6@verizon.net.

Discussions

- *Classroom DEAR Libraries* - Based on the discussion at the October MESPA meeting regarding how books can be donated to classrooms, at MESPA's request, classroom teachers have put together a "wish list" for books. Families can donate books from home or can purchase books for the classroom. In addition, there are leftover books from the 5th grade book sale that the teachers are welcome to incorporate into their classrooms. There was a motion to create a list of books that the teachers want that parents can donate or purchase. The motion was approved. The classroom library wish lists and sign-up sheets can be found at <http://mespa.winchester.ma.us/>. Donated books may be delivered to the Main Office. For any questions, please contact Maura Sullivan, mdsullivan@comcast.net or Laura Colella, colelladickison@comcast.net.
- *Gifts for Teachers*- State law restricts gifts to teachers that exceed \$50. The state Ethics Commission has considered raising the total to \$150 in aggregate for a gift from the class. However, if a gift is for the classroom rather than the teacher, there is no limit on the amount of the gift.
- *Math Club for 4th and 5th Grades* - There was discussion regarding the possibility of adding a Math Club to the Muraco After School Program for 4th and 5th grade students. A parent suggested that Winchester High School students might be interested in volunteering through the Connect and Commit program. MESPA is looking for 1-2 parent volunteers to help facilitate. If you are interested, please contact Laura Colella at colelladickison@comcast.net or Maura Sullivan at mdsullivan@comcast.net.
- *MESPA Purchases* -
 - Suzanne Russo Callahan Fund: There is currently nearly \$13K in the Suzanne Russo Callahan fund, named in the honor of a former Muraco student who passed away from cystic fibrosis. A fundraiser is held each year to raise money for the fund, which is intended to be used for the benefit of all Muraco students. There was a proposal to use the funds for an ENO board and projector in the library and for a climbing wall in the gym, since the Library and the Gym are two common areas that are used by Muraco students every day.
 - ENO board and projector - The allocated amount is up to \$3,150. A motion was made and it was approved.
 - Climbing wall for the gym - The allocated amount is up to \$2,500. A motion was made and it was approved.
 - Ladibug Document Cameras Laurie Kirby described at length the many benefits to teachers and students of the use of document cameras in the classroom. Document cameras allow teachers to project text, images or items onto a whiteboard or screen and they are an extremely effective teaching tool. She indicated that the document cameras that MESPA purchased last year are in great demand, with teachers waiting to use

them. Mrs. Kirby also described the advantages of Ladibug cameras, which are flexible and versatile. As a result, a motion was made and seconded that MESPA spend up to \$5500 of its surplus to purchase ten Ladibug document cameras for use by the Muraco school staff. After further discussion, the motion was unanimously approved.

○ Art Room It was reported that Lisa Gaultieri, our Art teacher, has decided to use the \$1,000 that MESPA had previously set aside for the art room to purchase a Ladibug document camera and LCD projector for the Art room. Mrs. Kirby described how Ms. Gaultieri had tried out one of the document cameras and projected the image onto her window shade (because wall space is limited). Mention was made of screens that might be able to be installed to produce a higher resolution image and further research will be done regarding pricing, which could range from between \$1.5K to \$5K, depending on the size.

Stop&Shop A+ Rewards Program -- It was reported that Muraco is registered in the Stop&Shop A+ Rewards program, which allows people to raise money for Muraco when they shop at Stop&Shop and use their Stop&Shop card. Registering a card can be done online [HERE](#). Muraco's school ID is 08829. It was agreed that MESPA should send out a separate email regarding the program. Anyone with questions may contact Maura Sullivan at mdsullivan@comcast.net.

Upcoming Muraco Events

- Thursday December 9 Early Release
- December 24th -31st No School