

## Swanson Middle School PTA Membership Minutes

September 15, 2015

PTA President Noah Simon welcomed everyone and reviewed the agenda. He added that we will be mindful of the 8:30pm end-time and if there are additional questions after the capacity discussion, Swanson Principal Brigitte Loft will be available after the meeting ends.

The agenda for the meeting will include:

1. Introduction of the new Executive Board
2. Review general goals of the PTA
3. Budget Discussion. We will vote on the 2015-16 budgets at the next general meeting.
4. Mrs. Loft will update us on school activities and a program returning to Swanson called "Conversations About Race".
5. Capacity Discussion

### 1. Introduction of the Executive Committee:

Noah Simon – President

Zoe O'Neill – Vice President

Monique Brown – Treasurer

Madelon Brennan – Recording Secretary

Ann Heinrich - Fundraising Chair

### 2. General Business Meeting:

Mr. Simon discussed the goals of the Swanson PTA. We are here to support the staff, students, and teachers through volunteering, field trips and donations. Last year we were unable support some funding requests from teachers and we will strive this year to fund as all teacher requests within reason.

### 3. Budget Review

Listed below are the major categories that comprise the Swanson PTA budget. For a detailed budget please visit: <http://apsva.us/Page/8279>.

- Administrative – PTA-related costs
- Educational programs – Educational, teacher, and staff support grants
- Principal's Grant
- Odyssey of mind and Reflections
- Student assistance fund – Students whose families need support for school-related events and items.
- Directory printing – If anyone knows how we could defray these costs, please let us know.
- Hospitality and support – 8<sup>th</sup> grade dance party, promotion, fall orientation, teacher appreciation.

The total budget is approximately \$34,000. The majority of the PTA budget is funded with donations through our “No Stress PTA Fundraiser”. To date, we have received \$10,000 total which represents about 20% families. You can use the [EZ Form](#) to make your donation, volunteer and purchase directories and Swanson PTA memberships.

We really need volunteers. We are asking that you volunteer for ONE event. As our enrollment increases, we look forward to having more volunteers.

We will have a budget to circulate and review for vote at the October meeting.

4. Mrs. Loft welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked all those in attendance. She pointed out some important upcoming dates (also online at <http://www.apsva.us/Page/8156>)
  - Monday September 28<sup>th</sup> – School Picture Day
  - Back to school night – Also that night we have the gifted meeting, family list curriculum and HILT parent meeting.
  - Book fair October 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>
  - Student-led conferences October 8<sup>th</sup>

She introduced Laura Partridge, a SMS Math teacher and one of our teacher liaisons. Through service, spirit and scholarship we look to engage all of our students. In spirit, we encourage everyone, especially our new students, to attend the activities fair on Thursday after school and find one community to join outside of the classroom. In scholarship, we have ParentVue for parents to log in and check grades. The information is updated by Monday evening so check on Tuesday. If you have issues, check the help button. In Spirit, we support our teacher and we most recently had our staff breakfast which we really enjoyed.

The PTA has been able to fund the “Conversations about Race” program. This is a great opportunity to learn about perspectives and the ways and lives of our neighbors. Mrs. Loft introduced Marti Swane. Ms. Swane has participated in this program and the goal of the program is to give you tools to talk about race and work to normalize conversations on race. Through this program, you have an opportunity to have conversations about race. The program starts at the beginning of October. Please see the attached flier for additional details.

5. Ms. Loft opened the capacity discussion. She will discuss the brief history (from June 2015) and present the planning that is in place to address the challenges of increased enrollment at Swanson. Ms. Meg Trucillo (APS Facilities) will provide additional details on the location options for the proposed relocatable. Zachary Larnard (APS Facilities) was also present to answer questions. Finally, Mr. Scott McKeown, Swanson Assistant Principal, will review the available online resources regarding capacity and introduce the capacity planning committee
  - Recent history – In June 2015, the public was invited to attend one of two community forums on interim options to address capacity issues at Swanson and Williamsburg Middle Schools. For details on the options presented and solution summary, please see:
    - [Interim Capacity Solutions for Swanson & Williamsburg](#) .
    - [North Arlington MS Interim Capacity Measures](#)

- In summary, the options presented for Swanson were to either have a temporary 6th Grade Academy at REED site w/some relocatables added at Swanson or add enough relocatable at the Swanson site to relive capacity. In August, the decision was made to add all the onsite relocatables to the Swanson site. Ms. Loft believes this is the best decision for Swanson as it will allow for less transition for incoming 6<sup>th</sup> grades. With the onsite relocatables, we allow the 6<sup>th</sup> graders to be in the building and become a part of the Swanson spirit from the beginning. At this time, we are considering placing the 7<sup>th</sup> graders in the relocatables. We are looking to have approximately 20 relocatables. There are still many questions that need to be discussed and answered such as such as cafeteria space, transition to and from the building, walkers, etc.. Therefore, we have formed a Capacity Planning Committee. The committee includes Swanson staff, parents representing our feeder elementary schools, and Swanson PTA and Administration. They will work to answer these questions and then report back to the APS Facilities in December.

Ms. Loft introduced Meg Trucillo for the presentation of the three options for relocatable design. She emphasized that she understands many of our children came from schools with relocatables and we are trying to balance focus on the long-term and short-term solutions. The new neighborhood middle school at the Stratford site will provide long-term relief for middle school capacity in North Arlington and we will next look at capacity solutions for South Arlington. We have this year to plan for the addition of the SMS relocatables in 2017.

The design option document was distributed and reviewed:

[Swanson Relocatable Planning](#)

Highlights include:

- Additional parking will be available at the church parking lot across the street.
- If we are looking at the 7<sup>th</sup> grades in the relocatables, we may have some additional relocatables (since they are a smaller class) that we can repurpose for other uses. They will be there only for the Core periods (Math, Science and Language Arts). They will be in the building for other activities. Science may need to be in the building but more discussion is required.
- We will not be making class sizes bigger.
- Relocatables will be clustered (see document linked above for details)
- We will maintain the soccer field
- Options include atrium area.
- Cafeteria check in process will be different. We may have a relocatable dedicated to special “lunches”.

We are asking the community to review these three options and provide feedback. In addition to the committee, we have instructional and facilities resources provide feedback.

Ms. Loft pointed out that we decided to have the relocatables by grade rather than subject or area. Each of the configurations allows the 7<sup>th</sup> grade core teachers get proximity to each other for instructional planning and collaboration. The middle school model is to allow for fluidity of scheduling and planning and this model allows for that model to continue.

Mr. Scott discussed the work of the committee and reviewed the capacity planning initiative information available. He thanked the members of the committee. He encouraged people to review the documents on the [Swanson Capacity Information Planning](#) page, in particular the Swanson Capacity FAQs, which helps to answers many of the initial questions that parents may have. Lastly, the [North Arlington MS Interim Capacity Measures](#) helps to put the process in context.

There was a question from a parent about adding current 6<sup>th</sup> grade parents to the committee. Ms. Loft replied that the committee is evolving and if there are interested 6<sup>th</sup> grade parents we can add additional members.

***Ms. Loft invited members to ask questions.***

Q: Why can't we put the relocatables in for this year?

A: It takes a significant amount of planning and procurement and it is less disruptive to add a large number over the summer when it will have the smallest impact to the instructional process.

Q: Have we considered connecting the relocatables with a covered hallway to the building

A: The committee will discuss transition between relocatables and building.

Q: What is the average class size of sixth grade?

A: Currently 27-29 per class. This is before the 30-day and after that point we may have the chance to add staff. 8<sup>th</sup> grade is 23-25 average per class.

Q: Has APS considered adding the 6<sup>th</sup> grade to elementary?

A: There is not enough space in elementary either, and from an instructional perspective there is a question of readiness.

Q: Is there recognition of the change in quality of student life?

A: Yes , we think a lot about the whole child and the experience. The relocatables plan will allow us to better meet the needs of our students. Ms. Trucillo added that this is an important issue and we are building the new school to better meet these challenges. There will be lockers in the relocatables.

Beth Sanderson (6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher and Clipper team leader)

As teachers, we are very student-focused. Although we had 100 kids last year per team and 135 this year, we will not change what we do for our students. We talk to the students about living in a crowded community and how to handle this.

Q: How are we looking ahead to the high schools?

A: Some ongoing strategies/possibilities for alleviating the HS crowding:

- Found 300 additional space at WL
- Career Center there is a new pilot program “Arlington Tech Central HS”. To be completed is 2022 beginning in 2020.
- Smaller program in various locations for HS (Crystal City, area hospitals)
- Internal space renovations at WMS and Jefferson
- Boundary changes are on the horizon with the building of the new MS at Stratford and eventually in south Arlington with a possible new MS.

Q: Is there a strategy for managing the fact that the students do not have individual gym lockers here at SMS and they have to carry their gym clothing around? Is there classroom space available for cafeteria space?

A: We will be getting feedback from the kids regarding the new gym locker program. We can work individually with students. This is the value of STAR: provides a point of contact for your child and a place where we can work on that executive functioning and planning. We can re-visit this plan at any time. One suggested polling the community.

Q: What can we do about larger events (promotion), additional sports since it is becoming so competitive, keeping up with classwork – Can the teachers put it in one place? Can we consider adding additional STARS - Art Start, newspaper star – giving kids other opportunities for “community”.

A: Yes, we will look at additional options for events.

Q: Is the MS at Stratford capacity 1000 students?

A: This number is still under discussion.

Q: Can the capacity committee consider the relocatables as a long term solution? Given that fact that many relocatables have become permanent (10+ years) at many locations, perhaps the committee should be making different considerations in their longevity, placement, etc..

A: Yes. We are now purchasing instead of renting which allows us to have more options with customization. Most of the relocatables are new.

Q: How can we relieve the lunchroom crowding?

A: After the first week, the students (especially 6<sup>th</sup> graders) will begin to move into classrooms (with their teachers) for lunch and other places around the building (library). The numbers in the cafeteria will go down for all grades. In the future, we may have an annex or additional space for lunch.

Q: Have we considered an addition to SMS?

A: SMS is designated a historical building which does require additional time for additions. In our location, the age and historic designation has us focus on alternatives for more space. The building was renovated about 10 years ago.

Noah concluded the meeting recognizing that APS staff and the administration and the SMS teachers are committed to making this the best experience for our students. For new families, we have the welcoming committee and if you are a returning SMS family and what to show some new families around, please sign up to be part of this committee. Please don't forget to donate to the PTA:

<https://swansonpta.wosomoso.com/index.cfm?scn=ws&dsp=pageread&vw=11921>

We hope to see you all back at future meetings.

If there is no more new business the meeting is adjourned.

The meeting concluded at 8:20pm.

***Minutes respectfully submitted by Madelon Brennan, Recording Secretary***