

WAMS PTO GENERAL MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, October 18, 2017, 9:15 to 11 a.m.

WAMS Auditorium

I. Roll Call (Speakers)

Meena Sharma, Linda Wooldridge, Karen Richman, Heather Olivo, Karen Hudock, Cara Rychecky, Jamie Sutton, Amy Button, Andrew West, Anita DeAngelis, Dr. Barbara Bush, Officer Tracy Baldassare, and members of the audience.

II. PTO News and Events

PTO President Meena Sharma introduced the current PTO Board members and WAMS AO PTO Representative Heather Olivo.

Meena then invited the audience to join the PTO and encouraged parents to get involved. She emphasized that there are many opportunities to do so, with different levels of commitment: from volunteering a couple of hours of your time at an event, to chairing a committee, to serving on the PTO Board.

Meena announced the PTO's Turkey Trot on November 12th and reminded the audience that we publish important dates, reminders, and upcoming events through our weekly VVE, to help parents stay informed.

III. BOE Update

Linda Wooldridge introduced herself and Karen Richman, and emphasized the importance of parents attending the bimonthly BOE meetings. She announced that the next meeting was scheduled for October 30th at RHS PAC at 7 p.m.

IV. WAMS Athletic Organization (AO)

Heather Olivo introduced herself and explained that the WAMS Athletic Organization (AO) is a pay-to-play organization. You can find more information on these activities through the WAMS AO website, their Facebook page, or through the VVE.

They have a Box Tops fundraiser underway. There is a collection can located in the main office, so please consider clipping those box tops and sending them in. Proceeds from this and other fundraisers help support our students and help fund our pay-to-play activities.

V. WAMS Update from Mrs. Hudock

Mrs. Hudock did a brief overview of current events at WAMS and later brought up the issue of vaping (e-cigarettes), which is the topic of our next PTO General Meeting on November 15th. She stressed the relevance of this issue to our community and warned that many parents are unaware of the risks presented by these devices – which are considered drug paraphernalia but are often quite inconspicuous. She urged parents to educate themselves by attending the meeting on the 15th.

She then introduced her support staff and their specific roles. Mrs. Hudock is very excited that the BOE approved an additional SAC for the middle school who has made a welcome addition to the team. She also explained that the new school counselor was hired as part-time SAC and part-time school counselor to one team.

VI. WAMS Support Staff

A. Cara Rychecky, Jamie Sutton, Amy Kamenir and Andrew West – School Counselors

Mrs. Rychecky, Ms. Sutton, Ms. Kamenir and Mr. West explained that counseling services are both developmental and proactive by design. Counselors reach out to all students by teaching lessons, or modules, in classrooms throughout the year. Additionally, they meet with all teams regularly to discuss student needs and team concerns.

If your child has an issue with a specific teacher, parents are advised to first contact the teacher directly. The school counselors encourage parents to contact them with any questions or concerns regarding their kids.

B. Dr. Barbara Bush and Amy Button, Jamie Sutton part-time) – Student Assistance Counselors

Dr. Bush is a licensed psychologist who works closely with the school counselors on some of the most sensitive cases. She is also a member of the school's Intervention and Referral Services / Section 504 Committee, the School Safety Team, and the Character Education Committee.

Ms. Sutton and Ms. Button both have an open-door policy, so students can stop by their offices and sign up for an appointment at any time. They are excited to work with the students and families at WAMS.

Dr. Bush, Ms. Sutton and Ms. Button are available as a resource to parents if they have any concerns regarding their children. If a student or parent contacts the program, no one will know unless the student or parent shares that information or asks the Student Assistance Counselor to share the information with a designated person. The only exceptions to this rule are cases involving life threatening behavior or suspected abuse or neglect.

C. Debbie Karuppan – School Nurse

Ms. Karuppan introduced herself and mentioned that she works with school nurse Mrs. DeAngelis and Ms. Persak, our nurse's aide. She reminded parents that they are not allowed to dispense medication to a student (either OTC or prescription) without a doctor's note and that parents must call in if their child will be late or absent from school. She then highlighted the importance of immunizations and encouraged parents to email or call them with any questions.

D. School Resource Officer – Officer Tracy Baldassare

Officer Baldassare has been a police officer for 14 years and this is her 6th year as a full-time School Resource Officer at WAMS. She is involved in student counseling, crime prevention, and serves as the police liaison to the district's elementary schools. As School Resource Officer, she has a proactive role, focused on prevention.

Officer Baldassare teaches internet safety, smart decision-making regarding alcohol, tobacco and other drugs to 6th graders. For 7th and 8th graders, she focuses on cyberbullying, texting, sexting, suicide prevention, alcohol and marijuana laws. With 8th graders, she discusses the risks of pills and heroin addiction.

Submitted by:

*Tissiana Oliva
WAMS PTO, VP of Programs*