

Whitman High School PTSA Minutes
April 17, 2007

Laura Cecala called the meeting to order at 7:35 PM. She asked for a moment of silence in memory of the students and faculty who died at VA Tech. Mr. OuYang shared that 22 Whitman alumni attend VA Tech currently, but that none of those students were injured.

Laura recognized this month's Exceptional Viking Volunteers:

- Networking chairs (9th) Diana Dempster, Karen Schafer (10th) Debbie Werner, Lucy Neher (11th) Mary Beth Schiffman, Leslie Shedlin, Ann Sablosky (12th) Madeline Killefer, Debbie Pollak
- MCCPTA representative Mary Staley
- "Every 15 Minutes" program parent coordinator, Bekki Sims

The minutes of the March meeting were unanimously approved.

Chloe Bethel gave the SGA report. Upcoming events include:

- April 19-21 – Whitman Talent Show.
- April 26 – seniors versus staff basketball game. Proceeds will benefit the National Center for Children and Families.
- May 1 – blood drive. Student donors must be at least 17 years old and weigh at least 110 lbs. Spring athletes are not permitted to donate. There are other restrictions related to recent travel destinations, etc. Students will first be offered time slots, then teachers, and finally parents if slots still remain open.
- May 1 – Battle of the Bands. Eleven bands, including students from all grade levels, will compete. The event is a fundraiser for the junior class.
- May 19 – Mr. Whitman Pageant. Fifteen senior boys will compete for the title.

Chloe reported that SGA elections are coming up, and that in addition to SGA officers a small number of other students are invited to participate in the leadership class offered each year. Interested students can pick up applications in Ms. Webster's room (A227). She also announced that each year the Jerome Marco Excellence in Leadership Award is awarded to two seniors, one male and one female, who have demonstrated leadership in the school and/or community. Each of the two students selected receives \$500. Again, interested students are welcome to apply.

Bekki Sims described the drunk driving awareness program, "Every 15 Minutes", that took place at Whitman in March. Student Jordan Flack and the SGA produced a video of the program, and after Bekki's introduction the powerful film was shown. Mr. Ouyang announced that the state police are interested in possibly using the film, and NBC4 will be visiting the school later in the week to meet with the SGA about the program. The program is usually presented every four years so that it has maximum effect. The two-day program included designated students being removed from class every 15 minutes the first day (the rate at which youth fatalities occurred on the road when the program began in the 90's, it has actually improved slightly to every 31 minutes today) and becoming

“living dead”. The students had their “obituaries” read and could not speak or interact with other students until all students convened for assemblies the second day. The program also included a mock but realistic accident scene in front of the school that seniors viewed, and a speaker at the assemblies all students attended, a former Whitman parent who lost her son in an alcohol-related accident 18 years ago. The students who participated as “living dead” were debriefed, and all students had access to guidance counselors and school psychologists following the program. The video shown at the meeting is about 20 minutes long and can be viewed on youtube.com using “Every 15 Minutes” to search. It is broken into three parts due to its length.

Mr. OuYang gave the Principal’s report. The music trip to Chicago was successful with students bringing back 14 trophies. He reported that Whitman’s SAT scores continue to be the highest in the county. While PSAT scores stayed the same at Whitman this year, they dropped elsewhere in the county. Whitman will be offering an SAT class this summer for rising juniors and seniors. Mr. OuYang announced that Denchfield Landscaping donated a cherry tree in memory of Maria Cherry, a Latin teacher at Whitman for many years who recently passed away. The dedication is scheduled for April 20 and her two sisters will attend. Mr. OuYang reported that several faculty members are considering retiring this year, which is being taken into consideration as Whitman looks at staffing for next year. Finally, Mr. OuYang noted that the English department just put together another wonderful Shakespeare Festival, that the Its Academic team recently wrapped up another good season, and that the Speech and Debate team is doing very well in competition.

Lise Bernhard gave the Treasurer’s report. She asked for receipts from committees as the year comes to an end. Mr. OuYang shared that only \$1000 of \$2000 allocated for academic study groups will actually be needed. Lise made a motion that the \$1000 left over be moved into technology and used to purchase an LCD projector and wireless microphone, two wish list items already identified. The motion was seconded and approved. Additional wish list items may be proposed at the May meeting, after the budget has been reconciled.

Committee Reports:

Guidance Advisory Committee:

Bekki Sims gave the GAC report. The meeting for seniors and parents on the transition to college is scheduled for May 23. Materials from the college night program just held for juniors and their parents are still available in the CIC office. The next GAC meeting will be held April 25 at 2:15 PM, Fran Landau will talk about stress and depression awareness.

Festival of the Arts:

Ilene Jones asked for volunteers for Festival of the Arts, scheduled for May 16 and 17. She also made silent auction donation forms available.

NAACP Parents Council:

Kevin Beverly reported for the NAACP Parents Council. The Council, in collaboration with MCPS, advocates for African American and other minority students. Every school is asked to have representation on the Council. Some recent issues the Council has considered include the proposed cuts to the MCPS budget, HSA and other testing, and the fact that graduation rates for minorities are falling in the county (and concern that the problem seems to begin in middle school). Two upcoming events are a youth summit for African American students April 21-22 at Kennedy High School and a dinner to raise funds for the Council, to be held April 22nd at the Marriott Conference Center in Rockville.

Cluster Report:

Carley Lee reported that Paula Robinson testified at the County Council on the importance of fully funding the proposed MCPS operating budget. Paula also noted once again the need for more guidance counselors, advocated for the smaller class size initiative to continue to be implemented, and advocated for the Learning Centers to remain open.

Nominating Committee:

Carley also presented the PTSA Executive Board slate for the 2007-2008 school year. The slate, which follows, will be voted on at the May meeting.

- Whitman CO-Presidents: Sarah Koines and Laura Cecala
- VP Membership: Jay Kaufman and Betty Lee
- VP Volunteers: Sue Schneider and Joan Kristal
- Treasurer: Lise Bernhard
- Recording Secretary: Janice Mehler
- Corresponding Secretary/Whitnet Modertor: John Floyd

MCCPTA:

Mary Staley reported for MCCPTA. She announced that a new high school grade and credit report would be sent home in late May. Each student's report will include an unofficial transcript, the student's HSA status, and so on. She reported that MCCPTA's Grading and Reporting committee is proposing a new approach to determining semester grades. Currently teachers use the Grade Configuration Table for Semester Grades, which is based on a 4.0 scale and with two-quarter grades and usually a final exam, can lead to grade compression. The proposed approach would use a straight 0-100-percentage scale and MCCPTA believes that methodology is fairer. The percentage grade would appear on report cards. The decision may be controversial, while MCCPTA's approach may be numerically clearer, the current method allows, for example, teachers to recognize trends (up or down). MCCPTA has asked that PTSAs vote on whether or not they support the proposed new approach, however the feeling was that more information and more input is needed before the resolution can be voted on.

Mr. OuYang mentioned that other counties are starting to change the weighting system for grades so that AP courses are given more weight than honors courses, and that may be something MCPS considers at some point.

Post Prom:

Sarah Koines reported for the post prom committee that the post prom event will start at 1 AM and end at 5 AM and that the committee has arranged with Barwood Cab to provide free rides home to tired students who don't want to drive. Volunteers are still needed, preferably the parents of underclassmen and juniors. The post prom chairs will meet next week with all seniors to review the evening's guidelines (must arrive by 2:15 AM, casual clothes, etc). It had been reported earlier in the meeting that the yard sale in support of post prom netted \$5700 after expenses.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 PM.

The next PTSA meeting is scheduled for May 15.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Judson, Co-recording Secretary