

Burning Tree PTA Minutes – March 4, 2008 at 7:00pm

The meeting was called to order by President, Olivia Lai. The February 5, 2008 PTA meeting minutes were approved.

**President's Report:** Olivia Lai thanked the Adult Fundraiser Committee Chairs Cindy Campbell, Erin Deric, Surya Shah and Michael Chelst for a fun and successful event, and for the 100's of hours they contributed. She also thanked Ira Feldman for organizing the auctioneer. She encouraged current committee chairs to let their appropriate VP's know whether they plan to continue in their role next year. Also, any parents interested in helping out with or chairing a PTA event or program next year are encouraged to let the appropriate VP's know.

**Vice Presidents' Reports:** Volunteers: Brenda Conroy thanked parents for their significant commitment of time over the last month including the Valentines Day class parties, Math Day, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Concert, Adult Fundraiser and Staff Appreciation Lunch in addition to the ongoing commitments of the Media Center, lunch room, playground, health room, classrooms and in the school grounds. Fund Raising: Cindy Campbell announced that the Adult Fundraiser raised \$41,000.00 and that after expenses, this would give the PTA \$25,000.00 She thanked her Co-chairs for the 100's of hours it took to organize the event. She reported that there are two remaining fundraising events: the plant sale and original art program, and the Spring Fair will be held in May. She said there would not be another Fix 'n' Feast as the company was going out of business. School Based Programs: Karen van Loon thanked the Math Day Co-chairs, Nic Ryba, Amy Lenkin and Sheryl Issacs for a successful event. Community Based Programs: Vicki Herson reported that Martha's Table was moderately successful last month. She said 1,000 Sandwiches is Thursday. All children will participate. Parent volunteers are still needed, especially between 12:30 and 2:15pm.

**Nominating Committee Report:** Dorene Rosenthal reported that a committee had been formed. Members are Britta Battaille, Brenda Conroy, Wynne Sitrin, Snoody Schneider, Debbie Rubin, Cindy Boinis and Dorene Rosenthal. All grades are represented. The committee will convene next week and report to the PTA at the end of April so recommendations may be discussed at May's PTA meeting. Dorene invited anyone interested in serving to please contact her or a committee member.

**Principal's Report:** Dr Chaset thanked everyone who helped make the Adult Fundraiser a fun and successful night. She said the staff really enjoyed the evening and thanked the PTA for hosting them. Staff Positions: Dr Chaset reported that all positions have been filled. Ms Borg remains on bed rest but is well and approaching her due date on 3/13. She will let parents know when the baby is born. Ms Soriton's knee surgery was successful and she will return in a couple of weeks. Learning Center Meeting: A meeting with staff and Learning Center Parents was held on Thursday evening. Trends in special education generally, and at Burning Tree in particular, were presented. Models of inclusion were discussed. Parents were gratified to see staff so well represented at the meeting. Kindergarten Assessments: The MCCPTA has asked for PTA feedback on recommended changes to the way in which Kindergarten children are assessed at the start of the school year in response to concerns that these one-on-one assessments take a lot of time from the instructional calendar. Three options were recommended by a committee of educators and parents: do test over the summer by appointment; to test in the pre-service days at the start of the school year and delay the Kindergarten start date until the third day of school; or, implement a rolling start day under which a third of the Kindergarten intake would start on each of the first three days of the year. Dr Chaset reported that it was the teachers' view that none of these options were workable because of the need to get the children into school and used to the school routine as quickly as possible. MCPS has decided that there are no additional funds to meet the cost of the first two options and therefore it has asked for feedback only on the third. It was discussed that a rolling start with immediate assessment by a "stranger" would be stressful

for the child, unsuccessful because of the emotions of starting school, logistically difficult for families with two working parents, and fragmented the class. One parent said that a rolling start at her children's former school was in fact successful and popular with the children. Dr Chaset said that if adopted, the proposal would be prescriptive for all schools. She said it was not decided if it would be implemented in the 2008 or 2009 school year. Olivia Lai undertook to pass on parents' concerns to MCCPTA and to keep parents informed on the progress of the debate. Facilities Report: Mr Tark reported that the extension to the climbing wall in the back playground had been constructed but was not yet available for use pending approval by School Safety. BT Web Site: Mr Tark reported that the design has been completed. The accuracy of the content is now being checked and several staff members are being trained as web masters. The site should go live after Spring Break. Gymnasium Dedication: Mr Tark said the dedication would occur 4/12 from 4:00 – 5:00pm. Invitations will be sent out shortly. There will be a ribbon-cutting, dignitaries, music and a gift for every child courtesy of the PTA.

**Treasurer's Report**: Lisa Norwalk alerted parents that the figures in her monthly report for the Adult Fundraiser were misleading as expenses have been paid, but income not yet received from the Committee. Cindy Campbell reiterated that the event would clear approximately \$25,000.00. Invoices for the new digital TV studio have been received and paid.

**Teachers' Report**: Coleen Carone thanked the Math Committee and parents for Math Day. Children were thrilled by the activities which were beautifully presented. Staff were very grateful for February's Staff Appreciation lunch. She thanked Helene Granof for organizing the Family Science Night – 490 families from the Whitman cluster attended.

**MCCPTA Report**: Mary Zambri reported that she had been unable to attend the recent meeting due to a sick child.

**Guest Speaker**: Olivia Lai introduced Pam Mintz from the YMCA Youth and Family Services who gave a presentation titled, "Parenting Without Threats or Bribes".

**New Business**: Dr Chaset announced that she is leaving Burning Tree at the end of June to move to South Florida to be with her parents, daughter and grandchild. She said that in a 39 year career as an educator, her eight years at BT had been the most rewarding. She praised the unique partnership between parents and staff at BT and said the environment of mutual respect at the school allowed the children to learn and grow. Dr Chaset received a standing ovation from parents. Dr Chaset assured parents that the children would be her first priority in the months ahead. The children will be told the news tomorrow and a letter will be sent to parents. Parents and staff will be involved in the selection of her successor. Olivia Lai and Lisa Sanfuentes will meet with Dr Stetson on Thursday to discuss the procedure for hiring a principal. Dr. Stetson will head a community meeting at BT so that parents may discuss the characteristics they feel are important in the next principal. Parents and staff will be represented on the selection committee. It is hoped that a decision will be announced in May. Coleen Carone said the staff was told Monday and is grieving. She said Dr Chaset has been a mother, counselor, mentor and friend who challenged and inspired teachers. Ms Carone said the staff support and respect Dr Chaset's decision and that she leaves them stronger and better prepared for the challenges ahead. Olivia Lai described Dr Chaset as one of a kind. She praised Dr Chaset for putting the interests of the children first in her every decision. Mr Tark explained that his future next year is uncertain, but if normal procedure is followed he will be undertaking his internship year as Principal at another school. He committed to keeping parents fully informed.

Respectfully submitted,  
Brenda Conroy, Acting Recording Secretary