

Minutes of CES PTO March 11 , 2025 Meeting

Officers: Aaron Zain, Heather Cobb, Jen Rice, Mia Park, Tyson Stoddard

Attendees: Aaron Zain, Jen Rice, Mia Park, Brendan Mahoney, David Champlin, Amy Sizer

Motion to begin at 6:05 pm.

Approval of February Meeting Minutes (Mia Park)

- Motion to approve minutes 6:07 pm by Jen Rice and Mia Park seconds.

President's Report (Aaron Zain)

Good news: Congrats and thank you to everyone who made the Bingo event happen! It was an effective fundraiser and a wonderful time. Our operating budget has been met for next year. Any extra funding

Bad news: We raise funds the prior year for the next year's PTO budget. So all fundraising this year is for next year's budget (2025-2026). Unfortunately, we need to have a tough conversation about the following year's budget (2026-2027) with the news that we can no longer use the cemetery for Halloween Town, an event that brought in half our budget this past year.

Principal and Teachers Report (Aaron Zain on behalf of Tyson)

Teachers have sent thank you notes for the mini grant funds. Example, Mrs. Lenz's domino kit was used at the steam fair and was wildly popular. Tyson thanked the PTO for providing the steam fair t-shirts for all participating students.

Committee Reports

Bingo Basket Raffle (Aaron Zain on behalf of Brendan Mahoney)

This year's bingo event was a wild success financially and as a community event. The PTO made over \$3000 due to school-wide participation of parents, staff, students, alumni. Thank you Brendan and Aaron Z. for leading this event! Brendan has agreed to chair the event next year. Kids on free school lunch were given 5 tickets for the raffle funded by the PTO. Thank you, Becca, for communicating to room parents to get the baskets organized! Thank you to all parents who helped put the baskets together and for your support!

Comments: Using cards to verify that they got a prize worked really well. Layout was borrowed from previous years. The PA system needs improvement so people in the back can hear, which would benefit other events like concerts - this could be a special project.

Spring Fling (Jen Rice on behalf of Caitlin Calder and Meg Stewart)

- Saturday May 17th Spring Fling 5-8:30pm at the Chester Meeting House
- Brian Wilkens will provide live music
- Planning committee meets weekly and the event is coming together nicely
- Soliciting donations for silent auction - if you have new ideas about silent auction let the planning committee
- Fundraiser will close the PTO budget, which should be minimal, and most funds will go to the fish tank

Year book (Jen Rice on behalf of Adele Andrew)

Need your pictures! Bingo event

Spring Book Fair (Interim Heather Cobb)

- Our Spring Scholastic Book Fair is scheduled for next week! Classrooms are scheduled to visit the fair Tuesday and Wednesday. Thursday will be a make-up day for students to visit. We invite families to join

us for a special Family Shopping Time on Thursday, March 20, from 1:00 - 6:30pm. This is a great chance to browse the fair together and pick out books your children will love! A sign up genius was sent out.

The PTO is still looking for a book fair chair for fall 2025 and spring 2026.

Comment: Can we communicate with teachers to get a stack of books they want parents to buy?

Teacher Appreciation and Welcome Back Lunch (Jen Rice and Aaron Zain)

Teacher Appreciation is a PTO organized potluck lunch with ordered food if donations are sent. Looking for a chair. Not an onerous responsibility 1 day to order food and 1 day to set up. Monday, May 6. Will send out a sign-up genius in April.

Welcome back lunch is the first day of school. Lunch is ordered.

Cultural Arts (Laura McGuire)

Playful Engineers will be visiting CES on **Thursday, May 8th**. They will work with both K classes and 1st grade. The workshop is called "**Maker Space Build Along: Chain Reactions!**". All the other grade levels will be participating in a workshop from **Eli Whitney** over the course of two days, Friday March 28th 4-5-6th grades. Friday April 11, K- 2-3 grades. K is going to do "measure mobile". 2nd life stages with butterflies. 3rd bird beak variation. 4th pinball machines, 5. micro architecture, 6. sustainable energy.

Halloween Town (Mia Park)

The PTO and Halloween Town (HT) committee were informed by the Chester Cemetery Association (CCA) and Selectwoman Cindy Lignar in late February that we can no longer use Laurel Hill Cemetery for our Halloween event. The CCA praised the efforts that went into making HT such a success and recognized the impact the PTO's fundraising has on school programming. In February, the trustees agreed that the event had "outgrown the space" and voted unanimously to discontinue hosting HT. CCA's primary reason is to maintain a sacred space within the cemetery but also mentioned concerns over the safety of visitors and cemetery property. Mia will send out an email explaining the situation and advertising a planning meeting. Mia will also be looking for a new chair to lead a new Halloween Town event if the PTO decides to continue this event.

Comment: Should we let the valley courier know? No, while sad/disappointing, this is not a controversial decision. CCA has graciously allowed the PTO to use the cemetery for years now. It is up to the CCA if they no longer think Halloween Town an appropriate or safe event at the cemetery. We as a committee have chronically struggled with keeping people on the path and worried about public safety.

HT committee has struggled with getting enough volunteers, so for this event to continue, we need commitment from CES parents to help make this happen.

Treasurer's Report (Heather Cobb)

Income

- Bank Interest \$5.84
- Bingo Night \$3,144.06
- Fish Tank Fundraiser - \$20 from Bingo Night and \$89.80 (donations less t-shirt cost)
- Halloween Town Bags - \$9.04

Expenses

- Bingo Night \$300
- Cultural Arts - Arts for Learning (Playful Engineers) \$1,175
- Fish Tank Fundraiser T-Shirts \$662.50

Old Business

Merch Fundraiser (Jen Rice)

An easy event. So far 30 items have been purchased raising \$150 for PTO. Will repeat in September with just t-shirts and sweatshirts. Not enough orders for hats and blankets, so folks were reimbursed. In future, we can do just a blanket sale before the holidays.

Fish Tank Fundraiser (Aaron Zain and Heather)

- We allocated \$20 from Bingo Night T-Shirt raffle to the fundraiser. We have received 8 donations thus far for a profit of \$89.80.
- The PTO's current allocation towards this special project is \$1,734.78, which includes reallocation of the mini-grant remaining budget.
- A community fundraising campaign site has been created. Heather is also working on the finalizing touches to a press release to be distributed to local publications.
- Will have tshirts at the book fair.

New business

Nominating Committee (Aaron Z)

ALL positions are open! Tyson and Aaron will be reaching out to parents individually. An email was sent out with information on position descriptions and process

Bus Driver Appreciation (Jen R)

In collaboration with Deep River and Essex, 25 drivers will attend a thank you breakfast at Chester Town Hall on April 9th.

Comments

Amy Sizer is talking to Tyson about re-organizing the veteran's day event. Proposing to bring it back to school and not firing rifles, for example.

Only 3 meetings left. April is a general meeting. May is when folks are nominated for e-board positions. June is the annual meeting: vote on next year's budget and on officers. In theory all parents and teachers attend.

Chair positions: this year's e-board is trying to find chairs in advance for next year. We need parents to step up and be in charge. Many parents do the work of chair, but shy away from the title.

Losing Halloween Town is a huge blow to our funding pool. The PTO will need to find other fundraisers to replace it. Aaron Z expressed that a non-fundraiser kills parent involvement, so recommends not to try an un-fundraiser.

Next PTO meeting is 6-7pm on Tuesday, April 8th.

Motion to adjourn at 7:16 by Aaron Zain and David Champlin seconds