Amigos de Birchwood / Friends of Birchwood

September 19, 2019 | 6:00 pm – 7:00 pm | Birchwood Cafeteria

Meeting Minutes:

Position-holders in Attendance: Jami Pitman (Chair), Katie Luerkens (Volunteer Coordinator), Cherish Flint (Secretary); also in attendance: Nicole Tally (Birchwood Principal)

Special thanks to: Esmerelda for her Spanish interpretation and overall awesomeness!

1. Welcome and Introductions:
   1. Amigos de Birchwood Chair Jami Pitman and Esmerelda welcomed everyone and introduced the Amigos de Birchwood group, explained the aim of the Birchwood Boogie (Amigos de Birchwood’s only fundraiser), and expressed how 3 full weeks of fundraising would generate more raised funds than last years’ 9 days of fundraising. They explained what the Boogie funds are used for (annual school year book, community events, family engagement events, field trips, 5th grade send-off party, and more.). The group then voted on Boogie dates. Friday, Octber 25th, 2019 was selected as the official date of the Boogie.
   2. Birchwood Elementary School Principal Nicole Tally expressed her excitement and honor to be at Birchwood. She explained the difference between Amigos de Birchwood and a traditional PTA (Parent Teacher Association): Amigos de Birchwood is a group focused on community-wide engagement and unlike a traditional PTA no membership dues are required and everyone in attendance can vote on issues (vs. PTA’s members-only voting structure) – this allows for more diverse input/engagement from all members of the community in attendance. She also explained that unlike a traditional PTA, Amigos de Birchwood only does 1 fundraiser per year (Birchwood Boogie). Amigos de Birchwood then donates the $ raised to the Bellingham Schools Foundation and then they return funds to Amigos de Birchwood as needed for our events – this reduces the administrative/treasury requirements of a traditional PTA.
2. Community Events and Sub Committee Reports:
   1. Birchwood Boogie: Jamie explained what the Birchwood Boogie is: a jog-a-thon style fundraising event where children collect pledges for the laps they run, and where families can collect additional donations and contributions from the local community. It’s the only annual fundraiser for the Amigos de Birchwood group.
   2. Volunteer Coordinator (Katie Luerkens): Katie passed around sign-up sheets for individuals interested in volunteering for the Boogie and other Amigos de Birchwood events. She mentioned ways Amigos de Birchwood might contact interested volunteers (via SeeSaw, text, phone, printouts, etc.), and encouraged families to chat with her when they see her at Birchwood.
   3. Other Community Events and Sub Committee Reports (for Meet and Greet, Open House, Holiday Gingerbread Event, Staff Appreciation, Birchwood Bash) were not covered in depth at this years’ first meeting, considering the primacy of the Birchwood Boogie and communicating the mission/structure of Amigos de Birchwood.
3. Parent Advisory Committee to Superintendent (PACS) Meeting Report (Jami Pitman and Katie Luerkens): Jami Pitman introduced PACS and invited parents to attend. PACS is comprised of parent representatives from each school. They meet with the superintendent and other district staff on a monthly basis during the school year to discuss a variety of topics, share information and broaden understanding of school-related issues. The next PACS meeting is Thursday, October 24, 2019 from 9:30-11:30 am, generally at the District Office, 1306 Dupont Street, unless noted. Those interested can contact Jami Pitman or Katie Luerkens to find out more.
4. Garden Announcements: Kelly Morgan introduced Kiana, the Common Threads Food Educator for the 2019-2020 school year, mentioning that Birchwood has the largest school garden in the district and that the Birchwood neighborhood is a federally recognized food desert. She introduced Garden Committee: to maximize the garden as a local, sustainable, and affordable food source for the Birchwood community. Kelly mentioned 3 upcoming garden-related events in October at Birchwood Elementary School and Shuksan Middle School (more official times/dates/locations to follow in the next meeting).
5. Next Amigos de Birchwood Meeting Date: Next Amigos de Birchwood meeting will be Tuesday Oct 15th at 5:30.