

# Liberty Music Boosters (LMBA)

## Meeting minutes- November 17, 2009

*President – John Scherer*

*Vice President - Seth Joseph*

*Treasurer – Gary Bell*

*Secretary - Betsey Farquhar-Bradish*

*Member at Large - Cathy Epervary*

*Present: Ray Baker, Gary Bell, Jane Davidson Bell, Sheri Burke, Betsey Farquhar-Bradish, Seth Joseph, Denise Lahrman, Lisa DeLeon, Michael Luers, Susie Norris, Lori Parfenchuk, Laurie Parsons, Laura Sams, John Scherer, Becky Shatto, Liz Shires, Belinda Simile, Dan Simile Jr, Donna Roach, Judy Vires, Martha von Hillebrandt.*

*Directors: Doug O'Neal, Travis Hicks, Jill Bixler*

*Guests: Jim Hofstetter, The Loft Violin Shop; Jeff Brown, Olent. Sc. Ex Dir Elem Learning; Dave King, Olent BOE member elect*

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 by John.

John began the meeting by introducing our guests and with no objection allowing them to speak before we attended to our agenda items.

Jeff began with the handout found at:

<http://www.olentangy.k12.oh.us/district/learning/docs/ElemStringsAdjustment.pdf> and by saying that the recent changes to the strings program really began in 2004 when the district realized that their earlier plans weren't going to work when the final build-out projection came in as 23 elementary schools by 2020 to 2025. When the fiscal and academic concerns were weighed and cuts considered, strings and music instruction in general was certainly listed as something of value to the district. Part of the long term concerns are for what will happen when enrollment eventually begins to decline and we want to avoid letting staff go. He said that he knows the fear is that this is the first step in more cuts to the music program but that isn't the plan because this is a measure to protect music programs within our current 5 year forecast promised to voters as the time period before another levy would be requested. Unfortunately, in that time HB 1 has come along and caused a \$12 million budget gap in the 5 year plan, thereby necessitating a ~\$1.7 million cut at this time. The changes to strings would result in an eventual cut of 6 positions from the last schools and a ~\$842K savings after the supplemental contracts are included. The present 26 music teachers will be kept including 2 at the high schools and one working part time. Other cuts have been to library aides, athletic trainers (services are now contracted through Ohio Health), designated elementary school substitutes, and a change in the kindergarten schedule change to reduce transportation costs. As the plan stands now, all students will now have general music class instead of being able to choose strings instead and if they wish to participate in strings, instruction will be one day after school. Martha asked if there will still be band instruction during the day? Jeff answered that at this time the band option during recess will remain but there have been concerns raised about this by the Wellness Community. Dan asked if the parents would be asked to pay anything for the after school instruction? Jeff said, "no but they will need to provide transportation home." Jeff also explained that the present strings schedule at each elementary school is dictated by the schedule of the traveling Strings teacher, so this change will cause less disruption to the building schedules. These teachers will now teach general music because they all have K-12 certification even though each music teacher may have particular instrument expertise. Some other concerns raised have been about the one hour length of the weekly instruction being too long and too infrequent to be productive but there has also been discussion about splitting days/groups/transportation. Dan asked how much participation loss has been anticipated? Jeff said that there is already considerable loss from 4<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> grade but the district will work on recruitment of family commitment for next school year in the spring of this school year, planning for logistical challenges; as this is something already done for after school intervention services. Jeff said that he understood that change is loss but his aim is to get comparable or higher numbers of participants by the high school level. Laura expressed appreciation for this presentation Jeff made at the BOE meeting last week but also concern that the number of students electing to participate in elementary strings when eligible (~64%) far exceeds that enrolled in general music. Jeff said that State Regulations require 30 minutes of music instruction twice a week for all students. Judy said the possible negative consequences of this change are compounded by the reduced opportunity of Middle School students to choose now 2 rather than 3 elective classes that include music, art, foreign language, physical education, etc. Laura added that it is disappointing that major changes such as these have been made many times recently (i.e., core curriculum, formative assessment, strings, etc) without any chance for input or at least notification of parents. Further she noted that the district promised during

the last campaign, the levy was necessary so we could keep the "status quo" of our current programs but then within a couple weeks of the levy passing the Middle School schedule was changed. Jeff responded that the change in the middle schools' schedules wasn't just due to cost but because improvement was declining and our middle schools were spending less time than comparable schools on core curriculum; since the change, we have seen improvement. Laura noted that only OLMS showed significant improvement. There appeared to be no pattern to the way the other middle schools performed. Jeff said that considering the aggregate, there was improvement and most buildings improved in most areas. John asked what the proper role was for parent involvement. Jeff said it is the Administration's job to come up with the plans although parent input is sought sometimes, such as with redistricting. Sometimes parent involvement is too time consuming because it takes too long to educate the parents. There was then general discussion about communication with parents and cuts to Administration. Jeff then said there would be more changes coming such as cuts to techs and Elementary schools Assistant Principal positions even though our elementary schools are at nearly twice the state average enrollment of ~350, even though the Asst position is also a good training tool. Laura said her concern is that unlike other districts she has lived in, Olentangy doesn't seem to communicate their long range plans with the public and this could be problematic in keeping the faith of the levy voters. Jeff said although there is always room for improvement and there was general satisfaction with changes such as with redistricting, for the strings change the administration did work with the music teachers. They met with Pam Bachman and were asked to make proposals for cost savings but the plan formulated did not result in any and actually would have caused cost escalations or an educational block that couldn't be sustained. Laurie asked if the teachers were given this feedback and a chance to respond. Jeff said the Department Chairs were and they were then briefed on the Administration's plan which was formulated with the input of a general music teacher. Martha asked if these cuts are comparable to other like districts? Jim said actually Dublin has added strings at the elementary schools, they are doing it before school at a central location and then busing the students to their schools. John said it does seem as though music has been unequally targeted. Laura said again it seems the communication is delayed until after implementation as was the case with formative assessment where all the teachers did not understand it at the time. Jeff said in that example, over a thousand teachers were eventually trained that year. He said the Administration has been communicating the impact of HB 1 for some time now. He added that it is his job to create disequilibrium for staff because that is what happens with change. Judy said that we have many many bright and interested parents that could be of value in helping with solutions. Dan asked what other areas are available to cut? Jeff mentioned a few areas that are not required by the state such as gifted instruction. Belinda said it is a problem for Olentangy to be developing a history of taking away music opportunities rather than adding them. Martha said that since the schedule changes at the middle schools, music program participation is way down. Jeff said he has a daughter in sixth grade in the district that participates in strings as well as a child in kindergarten and that he does not want to see a negative impact either. Dave said that he has talked with Olentangy Administration and that they do understand the importance of enhanced communication. Jim shared his life experience with music making all the difference for the positive and that it can often be life saving to a child. He said there are school districts where tough budget decisions are needed but because of parent/community enthusiasm for the music programs, they are given great consideration. He said the question is, what is the next step for parents. He pointed out that moving programs to after school leads to a lack of accountability in terms of attendance, grades, etc. Dan said it seems we need to be thinking of suggestions for other ways the district could save ~\$800K. John said as a member of the district audit and finance committee, their emphasis is on state legislatures realizing the impact on us. Laurie said we need to use research data on things such as the link between music and academic success. Laura said those points have been made by teachers and parents. John said we needed to conclude this portion of the meeting, thank our guests, and then discuss our plan going forward at the end of the meeting per the agenda.

### Directors' Report

Travis reported that the marching season is over. It ended very well at Midstate competition where we made it into the finals and then moved up in ranking with our strongest performance yet. This Thursday we will be tearing down the scaffolding. As we transition to concert band season and the first performance is scheduled for December 14<sup>th</sup>, he and Aaron Given have decided not to split into two groups at least until afterward. ONU (Ohio Northern University) is sending a second corrected invoice for band camp fees.

Doug reported that the choirs continue to prepare for the upcoming holiday concert that will be in combination with Strings. As has been tradition, this being the year that the Chorale did not take a large trip, they are performing a large selection. It will be Vivaldi Gloria. The choir will be accompanied by the LHS Chamber Orchestra and professional oboist has been hired while a parent of a choir member will be playing trumpet. The concert will be December 13<sup>th</sup> at 2:30 (a slight time change to allow for scheduling of strings members that are also members of the Central Ohio Symphony Orchestra). Susie will once again (and for her final time): be preparing/coordinating the

dinner. Liberty Bells is featured on a pod cast, featuring soloist Lauren Collins, that has always been composed of collegiate groups.

Jill reported that nine strings students were selected for inclusion in the Ohio East Central Regional Orchestra this weekend and that four Strings students will be going to All States in Cincinnati at the end of January. December 8<sup>th</sup> is the date of the next concert. Three Strings students will be participating in the Pro Musica Concert December 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> & 14<sup>th</sup> at the Lincoln Theater, Alec Flemming, Josephine Chen & Aaron Shafer. The LHS Chamber Orchestra played at Coats for Kids/Veterans Program last Wednesday. They have been invited to play at the OOHS and OHS orchestras joint performances on December 3<sup>rd</sup>. The new dresses, cummerbunds and ties have arrived but the tuxes are on back order. The 30 member all district 5<sup>th</sup> grade enrichment orchestra will be performing at the Polaris Mall in front of Sears on December 2<sup>nd</sup> from 4-5pm.

## **Reports**

### **Active Members**

Betsey circulated the report of active and attending members (see separate report) as well as reminding everyone to sign-in.

### **Minutes/Secretary Report**

Minutes from the September 2009 meeting were reviewed by all in attendance and per review of all active members via email. Denise said the Wendy's fundraiser was for the general LMBA fund and Belinda noted that she also was interested in the ByLaw committee. With these corrections John motioned and Judy seconded approval of the report as submitted. The motion carried by unanimous voice approval of the voting members present.

### **Treasurer's Report**

The October 2009 report was reviewed by all in attendance. Gary reported that concessions with the many additions for cash/deposits/volunteers helped the season close beyond budget. Betsey said a huge thanks goes to volunteers and recruitment. We need to be mindful when making the budget for next year that the concession equipment is all getting old and the large grill needs replaced (she is working on a recommendation for purchase). Denise said that she will donate a propane grill. ! ☺ Discussion clarified the precedent of using propane grills within guidelines. Gary said he still needs some corrected W2s from staff. Doug asked if individual accounts could be used for such things as Harmony Camp? John said yes and there was discussion on what individual account expenses could be used for (clarification was for any individual program expense; i.e., trips, strings uniform shirts, etc.) and Gary confirmed he could process requests. Doug also noted that expectations will be better for Strings going forward now that there is consistency with our Director and trips being planned. Judy motioned and Liz seconded approval of the report as submitted. The motion carried by unanimous voice approval of the voting members present.

### **Winterguard and Drumline**

Denise reported that there is little to report this month as the season is just getting started. Expenses so far are for music and MEPA fees. After this Wednesday's auditions, we will know the number of students participating and receive their first fee deposits. Travis said there would be no winter guard this year due to the low number of participants and burden on directors with such a tight budget. Chad, president of OIPA, is still looking to represent LHS to host the competition in February. He attended the meeting on Saturday as our representative. Travis is working with Mike Perry to run the concessions for us. Drumline may still be an exhibition group.

### **Scrip and Kroger**

John reported that there is a balance of \$686.10 and that Gary has the details.

### **Fundraising Plan Update**

Laura reported that 21 students had placed fruit sale orders which is ~1/3 of previous years. Gary is helping to manage the individual accounts. Delivery will be December 14<sup>th</sup> and help appreciated. The City BBQ fundraiser is tonight - please don't forget to stop in and make a purchase to benefit LMBA ☺

Seth reported that Avon orders are due Friday and he will be present with Stephanie to receive them. Paver sales can begin as soon as he finalizes the flyer with Michelle. Susie said the custodians are concerned about the OSU chair still being on the back dock; the winner came to look and measure it but has not taken it yet. Seth said he is hopeful it may be donated back and the cost may be donated from the company. He also suggested a fundraiser with Momma Mimis restaurant, owned by a Special Needs teacher at Tyler Run and her husband. They will give 20% of sales on any designated Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday. Laura said she and Michelle would check for open dates.

### **Scholarship Committee**

A draft proposal was reviewed by all in attendance. Liz and Denise said they are changing the stipulation for the award to go to 2 students and not be gender dependant. The four year music program participation is transferable upon verification from the students prior school. Travis suggested comparing this to Centerville. There was discussion on the composition of the parent representatives. John said he would like individuals to submit comments so that there could be a vote on a final proposal next month.

#### Bylaw Committee

No report

#### Important Dates (per meeting Agenda)

- Next LMBA meeting: December 15<sup>th</sup> at 7PM

#### Old Business per meeting agenda - meeting discussion

- Vote on Bylaw change to add Assistant Treasurer to the board - John read the proposal and explained that the assistant would help with work load, benefit from cross training and cover during absences. There was discussion again about the problems/benefits of an even number of board members, making changes to the Bylaws on this Ad Hoc basis and the precedent of others working as financial managers without being board members. John requested a roll call vote resulting in the motion being defeated with 5 yes votes, 8 no votes, and 3 abstentions.
- Raffle with athletics (meeting with Mr. Gerhardt in January) - Lisa noted that a second raffle may be difficult to promote but may be more profitable than Pride Day.

#### New Business

- School board's "Adjusting Elementary Strings Program" - John said we needed a committee to work on this and possibly take actions such as a petition, coordinate with Olentangy and Orange boosters, etc. Betsey said she was very interested but would take on only if no one else was interested. As there were no other volunteers, she accepted the job. Laura noted that there are 2 times during the year that the public is invited to make comments at the BOE meetings; the first being for general comments and the second by topic. The board listens but does not respond during the meeting. Laura, Becky, Susie, Martha, Laurie and Dan all expressed interest in participating in this committee. Dan suggested methods of communication with the community such as handouts at concerts and Facebook.

#### Online Sign-up Information

- Scrip Sign-ups online at [www.shopwithscrip.com](http://www.shopwithscrip.com)
- Volunteer for concessions at [www.libertyconcessions.com](http://www.libertyconcessions.com)

John motioned and Judy seconded for adjournment of the meeting at 9:11pm. The motion was carried by unanimous voice approval with no objection.

#### Next Meeting

Will be Tuesday, November 17<sup>th</sup> at 7:00pm in the LHS choir room.

Respectfully submitted by Betsey Farquhar-Bradish, LMBA Secretary