

SJLES PTA MEETING MINUTES

Date & location: Wednesday, February 8, 2023 at 8:00pm, Zoom

In attendance (24): Meg Halvorsen, Meg Ballman, Candace Knott, Tiffany Burns, Carsten Vala, Katrina Vala, Jane Fisher, Emily Vainieri, Dina Zhuravel, Sandi Cresswell, Vanessa Zawodny, Tina Harkness, Yardley Young, Pey Lian Lim, Mary Brown, Daniel Notari, Kathy Etheridge, Stef Oh, Heather McCormick, Jenn Devine, Tara Scully, Sonia Kurian, Sara (last name not given), CHI (Zoom screen name; name unknown)

Next Meeting: March 8, 2023 at 8:00pm, Zoom

AGENDA:

1. Welcome
2. Treasurer's Update
3. Current / Upcoming Activities
4. GTAC Update
5. PTACHC Update
6. Principal's Update
7. Additional Updates
8. Adjournment

Minutes:

1. Welcome: Meg Halvorsen, PTA President, opened the meeting and welcomed attendees.
2. Treasurer's Update - Candace Knott
 - a. Completed events and fundraisers have led to \$1,700 favorable variance; Readathon money is not included yet because we have not collected it yet.
 - b. We continue to be very well positioned from a cash perspective to support our planned activities.
 - c. January spending was primarily attributed to the Instructional Support program, Student Activities Program, and Cozy Reading Night.
 - d. Honey Pig Hot Pot Restaurant Night earned \$114; Read-a-thon earned more than \$16,000.
 - e. Budget Adjustment Proposal: Gaga Pit. HCPSS is expected to approve this at the board meeting tomorrow. Candace requests a budget adjustment to account for a price change that has gone into effect since the proposal was first submitted.
 - i. Emily Vainieri asked for confirmation that the safety and risk assessment has been completed and approved. It is believed that everything is in place.

- ii. Emily made the motion to approve a budget adjustment; Tara seconded.
The motion passed unanimously via online voting (14 Yes, 0 No).
- f. Additional funding discussion concerning how to allocate the extra funds raised from Read-a-thon. A list of ideas were presented, which were discussed in a meeting this week between Principal Notari, Meg Halvorsen, and Candace Knott. Members may send ideas to sjlestreasurer@gmail.com. A general membership vote will take place at the March meeting.
 - i. Carsten Vala suggested giving back to a less well-funded school in the district. Dan Notari suggested Homewood. Members discussed asking the Homewood school what they need, and to provide items for students and also a gesture of staff appreciation.
 - ii. Multicultural Committee suggested using some of the funds to hire a Lion Dance group for Multicultural Night. Tara made a motion to increase the event's budget by \$550 for this purpose. Stef seconded. The vote was tied 7 Yes-7 No via online voting, and the motion did not pass. Suggestion to raise another vote at a future meeting for bringing the Lion Dance to the school in another event, such as an assembly or May Day.
- 3. Current / Upcoming Activities
 - a. Spirit Wear sale beginning soon, Feb 20 - Mar 12.
 - b. Read-a-thon and Cozy Reading Night were successful. Meg H asked for feedback.
 - i. Vanessa posed the question of whether we would do this every year, or every other year. Discussion about whether we should adjust this fundraiser or drop a different higher-effort fundraiser.
 - ii. Consider changing prize structure in the future to tie in reading more directly, instead of offering prizes tied only to the amount of funds raised.
 - c. Staff meal will be provided tomorrow 2/9 for Parent/Teacher conference day.
 - d. Theme Park Tickets. Meg Halvorsen checking on what the timing would be for this sale. Hershey Park information is available now; however, Dutch Wonderland information is not. Suggestion was given to do a Save-the-Date telling people that we will be having a sale coming soon while those details are worked out.
 - e. Multicultural Night is Thursday 2/16. Tara gave a recap of the different elements that will be at the event, including food, performances, and music.
 - f. Book Fair will be the Week of March 17-23 (Fri-Thurs).
 - g. Bingo Night will be held Friday 4/14. Date confirmed. Rain date TBD to avoid conflict with Battle of the Books.
- 4. Gifted and Talented Advisory Council (GTAC) Update - Sandi Cresswell, Carsten Vala
 - a. Sandi shared notes from the GTAC meeting. GTAC is seeking new committee members for next year to fill several openings.
 - b. GTAC is launching an Educator Recognition program. Submissions due by March 3, via this link:
<https://news.hcpss.org/news-posts/2023/01/g-t-advisory-seeks-nominations-for-educator-recognition-due-march-3-2023/>
 - c. Carsten shared that GTAC is seeking Judges for the Unheard Perspectives event at Hammond Middle School on February 25, and also for the Howard County

History Day on March 4 at Long Reach High School. Judges for middle and high school entries submitted by students from across Howard County. Email kelly_reichardt@hcpss.org if you're interested. Experience is not necessary; judge training is provided the day of each event.

5. PTA Council of Howard County (PTACHC) Updates - Tiffany Burns
 - a. It's budget season for HCPSS BOE. There have been 2 public hearings for feedback on the budget, and there may be a third, so be on the lookout for that information. After the budget is formed, it goes to the County Executive. This budget proposal is higher than the previous budget; the school district generally presents an inflated budget because the County Executive/Council cannot add any funds to the budget.
 - b. Parent advocates are needed for BOE budget discussions, because there is so much money being discussed. Parent turnout at these hearings have been low.
 - c. Issues include overcrowding, teacher compensation, student resources. HCPSS will need as much money as they can get.
 - d. Additionally there was information from PTACHC about MemberHub, and Tiffany will be sharing ideas with Meg H on how we may be able to save money on expenses using MemberHub.
 - e. PTACHC meeting minutes are posted to our website for everyone to review.
 - f. Question was asked about school start times and whether the HCPSS BOE has made a decision. No update on start times was shared at the PTACHC meeting, but it seems the BOE has gone forward with their proposal to change the times.
6. Principal's Update - Daniel Notari
 - a. Thank you to everyone here doing the work of the PTA to support the school.
 - b. This week marked the 100th day of school.
 - c. The PTA-sponsored Cultural Arts assembly. "Get C.R.U.N.K." was held today. Mr. Notari tweeted photos via the school's Twitter account (@hcpss_sjles). Students were very responsible and following directions well. The students were a well-behaved and engaged audience for this assembly.
 - d. Staff are continuing the calibration of practices and pedagogy and working on the school improvement plan.
 - e. Celebrating the work of GT teachers do, Ms. Miles and also Ms. McErlean, who has won an award. These teachers are working to engage students on different levels, including a coding program.
 - f. Teachers are working with their teams in a process of peer observations and discussing trends identified from this.
 - g. Staff members are continuing to foster connections with each student and their families.
 - h. Attendees had the opportunity to ask questions, including the following:
 - i. When are language classes offered? In Howard County, the world languages programs are offered in middle school, but the specific grade seems to vary by school.
 - ii. Will there be dedicated staff supervision for the Gaga Pit that is being installed soon? The installation of the Gaga Pit has been through many

review boards in the district for approval. There will also be instruction through PE classes. The staff will monitor the response and navigate how best to implement use of the installation. There may be a need to rotate which groups can use it at which times. There are three staff members on the playground supervising recess at all times.

7. Additional Updates: Parent Information Nights - Tiffany Burns
 - a. Tiffany acquired a list of resources for this that meets the requirements. Speakers must be credentialed and must be unpaid.
 - b. Tiffany will share a list of the topics suggested, including online safety, recognizing signs of anxiety in children, and so on. Members are invited to provide feedback on these topics and suggest additional topics.
 - c. Suggestion given to host a session on interpreting standardized test scores, including MAP, CogAT, and other assessments, and how to move forward if you discover your student is having an academic problem.
 - d. Suggestion given to host sessions on diversity and inclusion
8. Adjournment: Meg Halvorsen thanked attendees and adjourned the meeting.