

Huntington School Parent-Teacher Organization
Meeting Summary
November 9, 2017

Board members in attendance:

Meghan Vitale
Leeann Wiess
Emily Pascale
Angie Vigliotti-Martinez

Administrators: Joanne Harlow, principal

District staff: Carmen Malone, Facilities Department; Selina Lazarus, Office of Family Engagement

Elected officials: Dan Romeo, Commissioner of Education; Peggy Chase, County Legislator; Joe Driscoll, Common Councilor-Elect.

Others: 4 parents, 1 staff member, 2 representatives from 21st Century program

Welcome

Leeann welcomed everyone.

Board member reports

Leeann reported that karate is going well, and the students are excited for their upcoming test and tournament.

There was no report on Box Tops.

Meghan reported that about 60 students attended the Family Dance on November 3. Jeff Wise did a great job DJ-ing once again. Cost for the event was \$5 per family. We collected \$230 at door and paid the DJ \$100, so we profited \$130. This is higher profit than in past years, so it seems that more families came (but with fewer students per family). All raffle winners were drawn during the dance, and there is just one prize left to distribute on Monday.

Emily reported that we sold \$922 worth of raffle tickets (by students plus the additional sold at the Family Dance). This resulted in a profit of \$612.

Leeann reported on the annual Election Day bake sale. She thanked the volunteers that worked the sale, especially those that were there to open with the polls at 5:30 a.m. We profited just over \$700. We have a lot of coffee left over.

New business

Picture retakes will be November 17. All photos were delivered to classrooms today. Fliers also in mailboxes today about retakes.

Ann is setting up another Moe's and 5 Below fundraiser. Moe's has to be held on a Wednesday or Thursday, probably in December. Trying to get 5 Below for a whole week, and trying for multiple 5 Below locations.

We have received some questions about yearbook orders. Online orders will be able to be submitted soon. Last year we got started too late to take online orders. Also new this year, parents and teachers will be able to submit photos online for consideration for the yearbook. Mr. Curinga will have NJHS students working on the yearbook this year, and hopefully into the future.

No December meeting. Next meeting is January 11.

Update on building renovations

Carmen Malone from SCSD Facilities Department spoke about the building renovation. He did not have hard-copies of the final site plan available. The project has been approved by NYS Education Department, the SCSD Board of Education, the Joint Schools Construction Board, and the Syracuse Common Council. They expect to advertise for bids in February, accept bids in March, and start site work in May. Facilities is talking with the building administrators about a construction phasing plan. They anticipate being able to move four classes at a time within the school building, then work on the windows, floors, and ceilings in those classrooms. The project will carry into late 2019. Construction of the new playground will begin May, and then in June work will start in the front of the school.

Meghan asked if there would be any time this school year without a functional playground; Mr. Malone said that the existing playground will remain until the new one is able to be used.

Joe Driscoll asked if any changes had occurred to the plans after Facilities met with Tim Rudd (newly-elected Councilor-at-Large). Mr. Malone indicated that the changes were minimal, but do include having stamped asphalt crosswalks possibly with colorized surface (color TBD) on the bus loop, per Mr. Rudd's request. Meghan inquired whether this treatment would be applied to the crosswalks on Sunnycrest Road as well. Mr. Malone indicated that the plan was only for the crosswalk in the center of the bus loop to include this treatment; the sidewalks on Sunnycrest are on city streets so the city is responsible for those. Meghan requested that the enhanced crosswalk treatment be applied to all the crosswalks on the school property, including those at the east and west ends of the bus loop in addition to the one in the center of the bus loop. Meghan also requested an updated site plan and elevation rendering showing the enhanced crosswalks; Mr. Malone said he would see if those graphics could be obtained.

Mr. Driscoll asked if the idea for a bus access road through the field behind the school to connect to Caleb Ave had been eliminated; Mr. Malone confirmed that this option was eliminated early-on in the process because of issues with property ownership and potential impacts to neighbors.

Mr. Malone indicated that new phones will be installed in classrooms, which were not in the original plans.

Peggy Chase stated that the site plan seems to add a lot of paved area, causing a loss of greenspace, and asked how stormwater will be handled and if porous pavement had been considered. Mr. Malone stated that the district is obligated to deal with stormwater on-site, and that their calculations indicate that there will be minimal change to the overall impervious surface. He also talked about maintenance concerns with porous pavement, which will not be used on this project.

Meghan asked if there had been any additional consideration given to moving the curblines along the school's frontage on Sunnycrest Road; Mr. Malone indicated there had not been. Meghan recalled that previous discussions had suggested that the City Department of Public Works viewed this as too complicated, and that there might be issues with funding for improvements that are not entirely within the school's property. But she wondered if the project might be viewed differently by a new administration, and suggested that it would be efficient for the city to coordinate streetscape improvements along Sunnycrest Road, including improvements at Sunnycrest/Forest Hill, with the school district's project. She stated that Sunnycrest Road is wider along the school frontage than in either of the adjacent blocks, due to the lack of a "buffer" space between the sidewalk and the curb in front of the school. This area appears to be a parking lane, but is signed "no parking." Restoring the curb line to match the adjacent blocks would also reduce the crossing distance for pedestrians on Sunnycrest. Mr. Malone suggested that this concern should be addressed to the City; Meghan indicated that she would speak to Mr. Driscoll in more detail about her concerns and suggestions.

Meghan also stated that in the past, parents have expressed concerns about how arrival/dismissal will function with the new bus loop and parent loop. Safety of walkers is a significant concern for parents, and we need to have a better understanding of how the new physical plan will be coordinated with new operations. Mr. Malone and Mrs. Harlow indicated that these details are still being worked out. PTO Board members stressed that parents should be involved in these discussions.

21st Century program

Mary Torak reported on the 21st Century Program. The program started October 16. They have about 340 students per day, with over 45 in the morning. They just decided to add another tutor in the morning. Tutors are talking to classroom teachers about what students need, and can help with class work or provide intervention for ELA and math skills. This is the seventh round of funding, and they expect to be with Huntington for the next five years unless Federal funding changes. They are once again partnering with the Boys and Girls Club. The program is now providing a "light extended snack" that is more like a meal, and the students seem to like it. There have been transportation challenges, and they are working out the issues and trying to get kids home earlier. Copies of program goals and objectives were distributed to those in attendance. They have both parent and student advisory boards, and ENL focus groups. There will be no Winter Break program this year. It was successful, but very expensive. No funding increases this year, so they can't afford to do the break program. There is more project-based and personalized learning this year. The Garden Club continues to work with the Eastwood Neighborhood Association.

Dan Romeo asked for more information about the before school program. The program runs from 7:30 to 9:00 a.m.; there is no bussing available. Students must be enrolled in the after-school program in order to participate in the before-school program. It is short for middle school – only about 20 minutes.

If students don't come with work, the program provides work; it is not a babysitting service. A parent asked if the elementary students in the before-school program are in the cafeteria while middle school students are arriving. Mrs. Harlow clarified: middle school students in the before-school program work in cafeteria, but the elementary students work in the band room (staff meet them in the cafeteria and walk them to the band room). Elementary students then move back into the cafeteria after middle school starts. Last year there were only about 10 kids in morning program, so it has increased a lot this year. A parent asked if the requirements might be changed, so that a student could attend only the morning program. Ms. Torak indicated that this could not happen because attendance at the after-school program is a requirement of the grant that funds the program. Current Federal requirements for before/after school programming state that programs cannot be "drop-in." Mr. Romeo asked if computers are available to students in the morning program. Ms. Torak stated that currently only one cart is available but they are hoping to get a couple more. Mr. Romeo also asked if a student could attend inconsistently in the morning, so long as they attend consistently in the afternoon, and Ms. Torak indicated that yes, this is allowed. Ms. Torak stated that they have also added more activities this year, in response to last year's survey results.

Selina Lazarus from the Office of Family Engagement spoke about the parent engagement notebook pilot program. This is being piloted this year at Huntington with parents of kindergarteners that are participating in the 21st Century program. It will roll out to the rest of district next year, and to other grades.

Funding requests

Emily introduced the 5th grade fund request. They are asking for \$100 from PTO (general fund) for a bowling trip. The trip costs \$6 per student, for a total of \$600. They are using \$127 from their account. Students will be asked to contribute. Jenn Barr motioned to approve, and Nicole Mulvana seconded. No objections, no abstentions; the motion passed unanimously.

Administrative report

Mrs. Harlow provided the administrative report. Parent-teacher conferences were held November 7, and more will be held on November 14 (including evening meetings). Teachers participated in professional development during the morning on November 7 before conferences started. They had a panel of people from the community, such as Catholic Charities and former students, talking about refugees' experiences. The school continues to work on priorities: culturally responsive practices, personalized learning, early literacy, student attendance, and math K-8 algebra strands. Last year, 100% of Huntington's student passed the 8th grade math regents.

Added items

Meghan asked if the pool heater had broken again. Mrs. Harlow confirmed that it is indeed broken, and the custodians are working to get it fixed as quickly as possible; hopefully this will happen over the three-day weekend. The physical education teachers did not feel that "wet gym" needed to be canceled.