

Huntington School Parent-Teacher Organization

Meeting Summary

February 11, 2021, 6:30 p.m.

Meeting held on Zoom due to COVID-19

Board members in attendance: Ann Yarka, President; Maureen McCarthy, Vice-President; Ramie Miller, Treasurer; Meghan Vitale, Secretary

Administrators: Joanne Harlow, Principal

Office of Family Engagement: Melissa Hidek

Others: 2 parents, 1 staff member

I. Welcome

Ann welcomed everyone.

II. Approval of previous minutes

Meghan noted that the minutes on the website had an error in the date (January 14, 2020, instead of 2021). She corrected the error and reposted the minutes prior to the meeting. Minutes were approved with no objections.

III. Board member reports

Ramie reviewed the January financial report. Current total account balance is \$23,710.97, with \$3,559.20 in the PTO General fund. The only activity in January was payment for the web domain fee, which was \$33.90 for a two-year renewal. This came out of the general fund.

Mrs. Harlow noted that she has requested reimbursement for a staff member from the Admin account. This was for supplies for Valentine's Day cookies for all the staff, totaling \$150. She submitted documentation from the staff member; Meghan and Ramie asked that in the future receipts be submitted as well. Ramie will issue the reimbursement check.

There was a discussion about the class account balances. Most class accounts are at or near \$0. A few have \$100 left from last year. The exception is 6th grade, which has \$451 because they did their own fundraisers in the past (ex: freeze pops). If classes do their own fundraisers, that money always stays with their account, as opposed to the funds from PTO-run fundraisers, which move to the general fund at the end of the year (for any balance above \$100). At the end of last school year, a lot of classes tried to use up their money for items such as T-shirts or goody bags to celebrate/commemorate the year. Many of these items were not picked up, so this does not seem like it was the best use of money. Some classes bought supplies for the following year, which was probably a better choice in hindsight. With low balances in the class accounts this year and no fundraisers to bring in money, classes will not be able to spend money on end-of-year items like last year, and the PTO general fund does not have enough money to cover the cost of items such as T-shirts for all students. The Board will continue to discuss this situation, and provide notice to teachers about the current status.

Mrs. Harlow said that some classes have been purchasing items, such as pizza gift cards, for family/student incentives. She has notified staff that there is money available in her budget to purchase academic incentives and PRIDE awards. Hopefully, more staff will tap into those resources.

Peppino's has reached out about doing teacher appreciation lunches, at the same time that some classes have asked if they could buy pizzas as incentives. Mrs. Harlow reached out to Peppino's to see if they would consider doing student incentives; she forwarded this email to Meghan and Ann. Ann responded to Jodi at Peppino's, but hasn't heard back yet. Rather than asking them to provide pizzas, Ann suggested it would be easier to provide gift certificates/cards. She will suggest this. Melissa said that she could help deliver pizzas if needed. Mrs. Harlow noted that the specials teachers have been doing incentives for attendance.

IV. Old business

None.

V. New business

Fund requests

The Board requested \$200 to purchase plants for the Sunnycrest/Forest Hill intersection enhancements proposal. Meghan explained that she had submitted a request for TNT Special Projects Funds, as discussed at the January meeting, for paint, traffic delineators, and other supplies for pedestrian enhancements to the Sunnycrest/Forest Hill Drive intersection. She modified the design proposal slightly since the last meeting, based on conversations with the City's Transportation Planner. The proposal will be reviewed at the February 22 Eastwood TNT meeting. It would be helpful to show that the PTO is willing to contribute money, in addition to the \$850 requested from TNT. This would be a temporary installation in the fall, and hopefully the paint will last until spring. The \$200 of PTO funds would be used to purchase plants to place in planters along the southern edge of Sunnycrest Road in front of the school.

Vote was unanimous in favor of the \$200 for plants, contingent upon the approval of the TNT Special Projects Funds. Meghan will attend the February 22 TNT meeting; Mrs. Harlow and other Board members will try to attend as well (virtual meeting on Zoom). Mrs. Harlow asked if we need to notify Facilities Dept and/or Superintendent's Office. Meghan said that all work would be in the City's right-of-way so would only need approval from the city to get funding. As the project progresses, we'll loop-in people from the district.

VI. Administrative report

Mrs. Harlow provided some feedback from the Family Reading Night held earlier this week. She had planned for 10 teachers to participate as specified in the Title I plan for "extension of service," but about 30 teachers actually participated in grades PK and 1-5 (kindergarten is doing one the week after break, because they had an information session this week). Turnout was great and the students and teachers had a lot of fun. Students are asking if it can happen every week, but there is not additional money to pay teachers for this.

Kindergarten orientation presentation was February 10, and will be held again on March 3. They did a great job, although only four parents attended. There was a lot of confusion about the links: Zoom vs. Teams. Melissa will send out info about the event on March 3 and provide info to post on PTO Facebook page and website.

Mrs. Harlow is planning to hold a Town Hall meeting for parents after the break. This would be to reconnect with families and provide an opportunity to discuss technology concerns, attendance, after-school program, state assessments, and Star data. Melissa, with Office of Family Engagement, is also thinking about holding a meeting with support staff such as counselors and therapists to provide more specific support to families that might need it.

A parent asked about the expectations for staff communication with parents: how often are they expected to communicate and how quickly should teachers respond to a parent inquiry? Mrs. Harlow said that staff should be reaching out to parents once a week for wellness checks; this is a requirement although the methods vary. Not every family receives a phone call each week – many teachers are using TalkingPoints to reach out to families unless they have reason to believe that a family has higher needs that necessitate a phone call. The school staff are spending a lot of time trying to connect with the families that don't respond and to figure out if there are issues that need to be addressed to engage those students. A parent concern was expressed about the responsiveness of the 6th grade team particularly for students struggling with math. Mrs. Harlow said she would follow-up.

VII. Closing

Ann made a motion to adjourn, and Meghan seconded. No objections. Meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Next meeting: March 11 (via Zoom)