

# MINUTES

## Horsemen PTA Minutes

---

*Date | time* Date | 8:30am | *Meeting called to order by* Christina Grillo

---

### In Attendance

---

Christina Grillo (President); Andrea Williamson (Secretary); Allie Scherich (Vice President); Julie Fiore (VP 1<sup>st</sup> Grade); Christina Papadopoulos (VP K); Amber DaSilva (VP 7<sup>th</sup> Grade); Tara Scheller (VP 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup>); Julie Last (Membership Coordinator & Chess Club); Elissa Smith (VP 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade); Doretta Miraglia (SNC); Andrea Harrison (SNC); Carla Garrido (VP 4<sup>th</sup> Grade); Keri Mackiewicz (VP 5<sup>th</sup> Grade); Juliana Aloia (VP 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade); Brianna Staudt (VP K & 1<sup>st</sup> Grade); Lauren McBride (VP 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade); Angel Rafter (Membership & VP SHHS); Mitch Sylves-Berry (Rivertown Parents)

---

### Welcome & Introductions

---

Christina welcomed the new Board and called the meeting to order at 8:32. Last year was a great year for the Horsemen PTA. JP won School of Excellence, and the Horsemen PTA membership grew over 400%, winning the NY State Membership Growth award. The growth was driven by staff membership; this year the focus is on growing family memberships (Angel and Julie to drive).

Horsemen PTA won a \$500 voucher in connection with the NY State Membership Growth Award for the New York State PTA Conference that is being held this year in Tarrytown from Nov 8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> at the Doubletree in Tarrytown. We will need representatives to attend throughout the weekend.

The purpose of the PTA is to be a trusted member of the school community. The grade VP roles are critical, to be the ears to the community for the Principals. Please share what you are hearing with your Principals.

All present board members introduced themselves and their roles for the upcoming school year.

---

### C. Borsari, District Superintendent

---

Chris Borsari, District Superintendent, joined the meeting at 8:40, to give an update to the PTA on the Districts' goals for the year. Chris reported that last year, he had a monthly meeting with various reps from the PTA to discuss challenges or things going on, which was very helpful to gain perspective and know where focus was needed. We will continue these again this year, starting October 7<sup>th</sup>, with bi-monthly meetings.

The District has had 4 overarching goals for the last 3 years; 1) curriculum instruction; 2) meeting needs of all learners; 3) socio-emotional learning; 4) [missed by the Secretary]

One example with respect to Socio-emotional Learning, is to develop common language/understanding across all faculty/staff for stress reduction & handling challenging situations.

The board has 9 goals this year;

1. **Athletic Programs:** forming a committee including parents and students at the MS/HS to meet over the course of the year to align to best practices in the administration of the Athletic Program.
2. **Attendance Policies:** Reviewing attendance policies and procedures particularly pro-active efforts to get kids to school (it all starts with being present). This is a bigger issue with older kids, and more of an issue with tardiness.
3. **Curriculum & Instruction:** During the last 2 years, the District has focused on vertical teams across schools and grades, given the number of distinct buildings we have. Vertical teams have included

ELA, Math, Technology, Special Education, PE, Social Studies, Science etc, for grades K-5 (the MS/HS has traditionally been more aligned). This year, the focus will be on Curriculum Conversations with the Board: Digging down deeper, getting more faculty and staff into the room, and creating a greater dialogue. Curricular areas of focus to be Elementary Writing and Math, Guidance, Health & Wellness Education, Social/Emotional Learning.

4. **Educational Equity:** (partnering with NYU Metropolitan Center). Equity is not equal. Looking to form a district-wide Equity Team, starting early November. Mr. Borsari noted collaboration in this area with other districts in the area. Election Day is commonly a Superintendent's Day in the region, and looking to hold regional meetings to learn cross-district.
5. **Facilities:** Bond passed in May '18, "Safe, Warm, Dry", which included Windows at JP, LED lighting, new boiler at WI / Morse, Blacktop and roofing, new seats in the Morse Auditorium. Work to take place mostly when kids not in school – over the summers and over breaks, by September 2020.
6. **Universal Pre-K:** Can we do a "true" Universal Pre-K program (where every student that wants to attend has a seat)? The District is currently limited to 108 seats, vs 205-210 typical class size. Currently assessing what the costs would be across staffing, facilities, transportation. For example, would we take back and make use of Tappan Hill (currently leased to BOCES)? A benefit of Universal Pre-K is equality, ensuring that all students, and not just those whose families can afford private pre-k, have access. The District is considering both a half-day model and a full-day model.
7. **Board Governance:** Reviewing policies, public comment guidelines, community engagement and communication to the community (versus just to District). Look to ensure pro-active communication vs reactive.
8. **Safety & Security:** This is a continued area of focus. The District will continue to review procedures, and ensure staying in compliance with ever-changing laws. Mr. Borsari works with first responders, police, and others in emergencies. The District has ~2,900 students, 500 staff, and just 4.5 square miles, but added complexity comes from supporting two villages, each with their own mayor, police, fire, etc.
9. **Technology Committee:** A broad review is being conducted, including staffing, expenditures, and instructional aspects. The District is looking for someone to facilitate this review that has expertise across all of these areas.

---

## Volunteer Review

---

A comment was made to the Grade VP's, to look for friends to take event chair roles to run PTA events (e.g. Book Fairs and Photo Days), to lighten workloads and spread knowledge on how PTA events are executed.

---

## Halloween Costume Drive

---

JP has enough costumes, so won't participate in this year's Costume Drive. The remaining schools will participate. Grade VP's to speak to Principals to put a box out, send out a flyer to all schools (WLM, WI, SHMS). Each school should identify a volunteer to organize and sort, including putting out the costumes for children to choose from. Each school will likely want to do this differently, in terms of location and timing.

A note was made that there are multiple costume drives going on around town, with the question raised if these efforts could be merged? May be difficult as we don't have a chair to represent the PTA across all schools. Angel Rafter to speak with one of the costume drive leaders to explore.

---

## Membership Overview

---

Typical Horsemen PTA membership the last few years was ~60 members, most of which was the PTA board. Last year with the staff push, the PTA had the same ~50-60 family members, and 250 total members (the bulk being staff).

So far this year, membership is at ~250, of which almost all are family members. Julie and Angel are considering a Grade contest in the Fall to boost family membership (Oct / Nov deadline), with a Teacher contest in January (winning school gets a hot breakfast). Still need to come up with a prize, based on input from Principals.

There is continued confusion over how to become a PTA member if you have multiple kids. Angel, Julie, Christina and others will continue to look for the best way to structure and communicate how to join with multiple kids. Can check with other districts on how they design membership (e.g total Family vs per each child, or each family member).

---

## Fundraising Overview

---

The Fall Fundraiser will be Boon (used to be Mixed Bag). Bags can be used to raffle off to teachers to drive teacher support, as well as a teacher credit based on participation rates, and participation prizes. There is a minimum – must sell \$6/catalog or \$3,800 at the MS... so MS will get online only, no catalog.

Other fundraisers are the same; Photo Day, Book Fair, Ice Skating, Square One Art, American Girl raffle, and a Disney Day Tripper raffle (Tickets on the way; location for raffle still TBD).

Other fundraising options: Dine-Out night, and Melissa Alvarez booth pop-up (needs an event).

The Costume Drive, Dried Marker Drive, Town Cleanup, Book Swaps, Movie Night, are all give-back's. It was noted that the PTA is suggested to have 3 give-back's per fundraiser, which limits the ability to raise money during or in connection with these events.

---

## Google Docs

---

The Horsemen PTA has been able to set up a free non-profit G-Suite. Through the use of Google Drive, we can build an archive of all of our files. This year, we'll focus on Drive only (and not emails/communications).

Within the next couple weeks, each Board Member will need to log in. Logins are first initial and last name @horsemenpta.com. Brianna will host 2 support meetings next week at her house. Details to be included in an email from Brianna.

We've set access rights by folders. This is open to feedback from the PTA Board on where changes make sense. Email with instructions to follow. Google Drive to be maintained by the Secretary.

---

## Update on Arts Funding Process

---

Each year the PTA gives \$13k to the district to fund K-5 Elementary Arts. This year, Dr. Gail Duffy (Director of Curriculum) will be administering the program; she will be providing the PTA with more specific information on what programs are being funded than in the past.

---

## Summary BOE Meeting

---

Christina noted that the BOE meeting details was mostly covered by Mr. Borsari's comments.

The Districts' Lawyers have completed an investigation into the social media incident from last school year and the Administrations' response. There will be a posting on the District website with the assessment prior to the next board meeting.

---

## School Updates

---

To facilitate these meetings, send Principal meeting notes to the board in advance and focus the board discussion on key topics.

- **JP:** In the first meeting with Mrs. Barnett, the focus was on the possibility of extending the Pre-K program, and recess materials and equipment. The question being discussed was, should this be an area of focus for grant monies, given it's just one school and there are questions regarding Universal Pre-K and buildings.
- **Morse:** Noted that there were many errors in the district calendars this year (photo day, timing of Halloween parade, teacher conferences, etc). The Board held a discussion regarding the gate to the playground area from Beekman Avenue. Parents are finding the gate open frequently during school hours. This was an issue a couple years ago as well. The Morse VP's were requested to add this topic to the agenda for the next Morse Principal meeting.
- **WI:** The Lunch period is split this year, so that each grade has only half the students lining up for lunch at one time, helping to reduce the lunch line to just 7 minutes. Road crossing on Route 9 is still a concern area. Mr. Holland had requested a crossing guard at 3:15 for late dismissal, which is tough given it's shift change time for the Tarrytown Police. Carla commented that this is a dangerous intersection – cars speeding through, drivers texting, etc. Discussion to continue on this topic with Mr. Holland, and potentially the Superintendent.
- **SHMS:** Still looking for Event Chairs, and need a Spanish community liaison. Karina (who is the current Spanish Community Liaison) may be leaving the district. Would need one or two other bilingual people that can engage in this role. It's a significant time commitment; Karina moderates and approves each comment that comes in on a community Facebook page. The page may not be sustainable, but do we focus instead on filling a PTA role? Angel to reach out to the La Association of the Tarrytowns – who uses JP for meetings – see if there are a couple parents who would take on this liaison role. Leah has been working with Barnes and Noble on the MS Book Fair (vs Scholastic) – currently reviewing the contract. The PTA will get a percentage of sales in a Barnes and Noble store in White Plains. Looking to get HS students to wrap – the PTA to get all wrapping tips (wrapping paper to be supplied by B&N). The week following, the PTA can get a percentage of sales from online orders too.
- **SHHS:** Angel has been discussing with the President and the Superintendent to establish a simple Poll to the community, "Do you want a PTA in the HS"? This is needed to change the bylaws to make the PTA K-12. There was a productive and positive meeting with the HS Principal, and a meeting to take place shortly with the Guidance counselors to discuss where the PTA is needed at the HS.

---

## Sub-Group Updates

---

**Heads Up:** To discuss in October's meeting. Will hold a board vote if we want to formally support this organization.

**SNC:** Will be a meeting coming up with how to read a 504 and IEP document. The District has over 300 families that have 504's or IEP's. No date has been set yet – working with Mr. Dorn to finalize.

**Rivertown Parents:** We can share district events with the other four Rivertown districts (Dobbs, Irvington, Hastings, and Mercy College). Another representative is needed to represent Tarrytown, and gather learnings from the other districts.

---

AOB

---

Meeting Adjourned at 10:17am.

---

### Next Meeting

---

October 17, 2019 | 7:30pm, The Administration Building