

MINUTES

Horsemen PTA Minutes

November 10, 2020 | 8:00pm | Meeting called to order by Christina Grillo

In Attendance

Board Members in Attendance: Christina Grillo (President); Alison Madrigal (PTA Co-Vice President); Andrea Williamson (Secretary); Brianna Staudt (VP Website, 1st & 2nd Grade); Christina Papadopolous (VP 1st Grade); Elissa Smith (VP 3rd Grade); Lauren McBride (VP Fundraising, VP 2nd Grade & 4th Grade); Dana Tavano (Volunteer Coordinator and VP K); Juliana Aloia (VP 4th Grade); Mechtild Steinert (VP 8th grade); Sophia Rana (VP 5th Grade); Krista Barron (Diversity and Inclusion and VP pre-K); Neelima Reddy (Spiritwear Coordinator); Mitch Sylves-Berry (Rivertown Parents); Beth Provencher (Spiritwear); Leanne Bloom (Heads Up); Mechtild Steinert (VP 8th Grade); Daphne Uviller (VP 7th Grade); Carla Garrido (VP 5th Grade); Katy Lough (VP K); Julie Fiore (VP 2nd Grade); Leslie Rosario (VP 7th Grade); Jessica Lake (Membership VP)

General Hello's and Introductions

Christina welcomed board members as they joined. She noted the public session would start at 8:15, so we may have guests joining us at that time.

Food Truck Event

The event was pushed back one week to November 18th due to the rain expected on the original date. There will be 4 food trucks, with menus to come. The volunteer list looks good, a bit light between 7pm and 8pm, but should be ok. Daphne volunteered to help in that timeslot. It was noted that this event would be a good one to repeat in the spring, if it goes well!

Possible Spring Collaboration with the Arts Boosters

Christina P also works with the Arts Boosters that supports MS/HS Arts. Their big in-person fundraiser that usually takes place in January won't happen, and are looking at alternatives. One idea, if able, is to do an outdoor concert event (e.g. at Horan's Landing) with food trucks and merchandise available. If the event is possible, the Arts Boosters wanted to know if the PTA would be interested in hosting this together. The thinking would be a fun, free, community event.

Christina G thought being involved would be lovely, but that the PTA likely won't have the capacity to help organize the event, given other spring events we hope to have such as the outdoor elementary book fair. Brianna thought we could manage to support both, given the breadth and strength of the PTA board. Andrea suggested that we ask the Arts Boosters to keep us updated as planning takes shape, and we can see what capacity we have to support once the ask and other possible spring events are more clear.

Re-cap of Arts Funding / Mini-Grant Funding with Joy Myke

Christina and Allison met with Joy regarding funding this year for Arts funding. Last year, we gave \$6,500 (of a planned \$13,000) of which \$2,400 is still available. The District is planning on virtual Arts programming this year and asked what funding the PTA could provide. Christina noted there is no set amount built into our budget, but asked the district to give the PTA an amount it would like that the PTA board could vote on.

For last years' mini-grants, only ~\$800 of the ~\$15,000 awarded grants were able to be executed before the pandemic closed the schools. Unfortunately, the remainder of the grants expired at the end of June. The district was supportive of additional mini-grants for this year. They asked if the PTA could add a step for Principals to sign off on grants before they are submitted, so we will need to adjust our deadlines.

Holiday Helpers

Elissa will be running Holiday Helpers this year for the PTA. She met with Mrs. Camaj (the JP and Morse Social Worker), who asked if the PTA board can support a small number of families from JP and Morse. Mrs. Camaj raised that food is a big need this year, and one idea that arose was to give food cards from given grocery stores. The PTA agreed to this plan and Elissa and Juliana will work out the details with Mrs. Camaj.

Mood boost gifts for teachers

Lauren noted in her principal meetings with Mr. Holland and Mr. Walley that teachers are feeling worn down, and their morale is low, given how hard they are working to cover just the basic curriculum. Lauren proposed that we do a little something to give to teachers K-8, something simple and inexpensive given the number of teachers and staff, such as small bags of candy or snacks with a cute saying attached. The board was supportive. Christina asked Lauren to have Maribel add a line item for this into the budget, and to let the board know where help is needed. The cost estimate was ~\$100 - \$150.

Spiritwear Update

The Spiritwear fundraiser launched this week and is live through November 22nd. It includes various shirts and sweatshirts and masks with the slogan "Sleepy Hollow strong, no matter the distance". It will be promoted at the Food Truck event, and has been communicated via principal Remind messages, Jean O'Brien weekly emails, and Facebook.

The order will be sent to Beth or Neelima's home, who will then sort the items and arrange for delivery, which will depend on whether schools are open, with the plan to complete delivery before the holidays.

There are 30 orders thus far, including 17 Mask orders (18 needed). Christina shared that orders will certainly pick up, as people tend to place orders towards deadlines.

School Toolbox for 2021/2022 School Year

We are being asked by last years' School Toolbox vendor if we would like to host this fundraiser again for the next school year. Daphne asked if board members could share their thoughts and feedback with her offline

after this meeting. They are again offering a 13% discount this year. Daphne thought there may not be a lot of feedback, particularly from teachers, given how little supplies are being used this year. One variable we'll need to decide on is shipping; ship to school vs ship to home.

School Updates

JP: The last of the photo days is this Thursday November 12. Literacy night is cancelled. There were Halloween parades the week after Halloween that were streamed for parents to watch. Mrs. Barnett has shared all PTA updates via Remind, and asked that we in turn remind parents to fill out the school survey for the term 2 school model.

Morse: The PTA asked Mr. Walley if we could host a similar event to the Heads Up essay contest Heads Up did with WI students. He thought an essay would be too much, but maybe something more appropriate for grade 1 / grade 2 students centered around Gratitude. Currently, shared Morse/JP Specials Teachers (Art/Music/FLES) have a Home Building for a few months at a time, zooming into the other school. Photo day was able to be completed, after the original dates had to be cancelled due to a school closure. It was noted that class photos are not to include teachers, which Julie is following up on to understand and possibly change.

WI: Mr. Holland and Mrs. O'Grady thought picture day went smoothly. They are not sending any paper notices home - all are being distributed via *Digital Backpack*. Mr. Holland noted how low his staff was feeling. He asked the VP's for ideas and help; Lauren shared some ideas, and had a follow-up discussion with Mrs. O'Grady. Square One Art is pushed to January with orders starting in March and ship-to-home. Teachers will do the art lesson, but parents will need to upload to Square One if interested. This will require a lot of PTA promotion. In addition to Challenge, Mrs. Hickey is also adding a Problem Solving component available to all students on Monday and Thursday mornings. There was a discussion among the board over whether class parents had access to parent contact information. This seems to be difficult to gather. The VP's will work with the building principals to see if there is a way for class parents to obtain this information for each classroom.

MS: Daphne didn't have much to note; the school has been closed several times with COVID cases. Mr. Whitham has been working to come up with alternatives to the Washington DC trip, which is not expected to take place. Daphne asked the board to share any ideas they may have. The staff face buttons were made and given to teachers, who appreciated them!

Committee Updates

Diversity, Inclusion & Equity Committee: The last meeting had 7 attendees, including 3 new members, with names of 2 additional interested people. The focus thus far is trying to define our mission. The original focus was *PTA en Espanol*, which is still a focus but the group doesn't want to create a narrow focus area given the breadth of diversity, inclusion and equity. Brianna shared details of the \$1,500 National PTA grant that was received. We were one of 15 PTA's that received this grant in the nation. We were eligible because we'd submitted for the COVID relief grant, and were not awarded. The funds can be used to fund interviews with experts and fund outreach, which should help the group as it forms its mission statement. The group is also going to connect with Natalie Zwerger from the NYU Metro Center for Research on Equity for guidance. It was suggested that the committee also connect with the Equity team the BOE has started as another source of input towards defining the mission statement.

Rivertown Parents / Parent Education: Leanne noted that we are in the process of booking “Pathways to Empower” for a January event, with a focus on resilience. The event will be an evening digital presentation. Mitch will share meeting minutes of the last meeting.

Heads Up: The WI Essay Contest was a big success and a lot of fun with a lot of clever and creative ideas from the students. Leanne liked the idea of rolling out a similarly structured contest at the other elementary schools, and asked for Lauren’s help in trying to define an appropriate contest, e.g. a gratitude challenge.

Meeting Adjourned

Christina closed the meeting at 9:35. The next board meeting is scheduled for December 8th at 8:00pm.