

MINUTES

Horsemen PTA Minutes

February 24, 2021 | 8:00pm | Meeting called to order by Christina Grillo

In Attendance

Board Members in Attendance: Christina Grillo (President); Andrea Williamson (Secretary); Brianna Staudt (VP Website, 1st & 2nd Grade); Christina Papadopolous (VP 1st Grade); Lauren McBride (VP Fundraising, VP 2nd Grade & 4th Grade); Juliana Aloia (VP 4th Grade); Neelima Reddy (Spiritwear Coordinator); Mitch Sylves-Berry (Rivertown Parents); Leanne Bloom (Heads Up); Mechtild Steinert (VP 8th Grade); Maribel Correa (Treasurer); Sophia Rana (VP 5th Grade); Krista Barron (VP pre-K and Diversity, Equity & Inclusion); Jessica Lake (VP Membership); Amanda F-C (??); Keri Mackiewicz (VP 6th Grade); Allison Madrigal (Co-Vice President); Leslie Rosario (VP MS)

Guests: Fay Serafica (Diversity, Inclusion and Equity Committee); Amanda (Diversity, Inclusion and Equity Committee)

General Hello's and Introductions

Christina welcomed board members as they joined, and formally kicked off at 8:02. She thanked many of the board who jumped in to cover in many areas such as mini-grants over the last month while Christina recovered from a mild illness.

Spanish language interpretation Demo

Brianna started the update with some background. In a January Diversity and Inclusion Committee meeting the team used the translation function in Zoom, which worked quite well, and was fairly straightforward to administer. She would like the PTA Board to be familiar with the technology, so that we can look to utilize it in future events. The demo showed the PTA board how to use the translation capabilities in Zoom. Fay and Leslie joined to provide the demo. The call operates in two "channels", with a second "Spanish Channel". There is an option in Zoom to select "Spanish", which then lets the attendee hear the translator speaking at normal conversational volume, while the volume of the main speaker is only heard lightly.

The functionality is available on the District's Zoom account, which the PTA could hopefully utilize when/if needed. It does require greater call etiquette, allowing a break between speakers to let the translator keep up with the discussion.

Community Wardrobe

Elissa shared the rapid progress that has been made on the Clothing Closet since our last meeting. Daphne connected with Diana Loja, the Community Liaison for Sleepy Hollow, who has also been working on a community-wide Clothing Closet. Thus, the PTA and Diana decided to partner to combine efforts. Diana had already secured space in the bath house at Kingsland Park through the end of March. They have been moving the donated items into the space, and starting to unpack, sort, and display clothing. The group has been struggling to get racks and hangers to display the clothes. They are in great need of hangers and racks.

There was a soft opening this weekend where those in need could sign up for a time period to come in to shop. The original focus was to focus on the school community, but now with the partnership with the town, the goal is broadened to the community, and to keep the closet open year-round. Due to Covid, currently clients need to make an appointment, which are available Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Given that the Bathhouse is only available until April, the tem is urgently searching for a longer-term space.

Volunteers will be needed on an on-going basis to help shoppers, and keep the clothing organized and replenished.

Nominating Committee and Elections for 2021/2022 School Year

All positions (President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer) are available for next year for a term of up to two years. Christina, Maribel, and Andrea have served two years in their current positions so cannot continue next year. The nominations should be made in the month of March. We will need a nominating committee, so anyone interested in joining this committee, or running for one of these positions, should reach out to Brianna. Brianna will send a separate email to the board with further details on what is required of the committee.

2021/2022 Booster-Thon

Lauren is waiting for the district calendar to be released before we can select a date and move forward with a Booster-Thon event next year. We may need to have a virtual event, but will wait to see where we are next fall.

Heads-Up Winter Contest

Leanne shared that she had planned an outdoor winter contest, but the weather hasn't cooperated with her plans! She is hoping to be able to launch this contest when the weather turns, or looking at another event option.

Leanne mentioned the Columbia Doctors request, who had reached out through Maureen Barnett about doing a presentation to district parents in concert with the PTA regarding student anxiety or stress related to the pandemic. [Columbia Doctors has two new local doctors joining its staff; they have a Mental Health and Anxiety office in Tarrytown to service Westchester.] Leanne offered to follow up with Columbia Doctors, to learn more about the session that they had in mind. Sofia asked if they had broader topics to cover, apart from how to limit or manage screen time.

Another source Leanne mentioned was Campaign for Commercial-Free Childhood (<https://commercialfreechildhood.org>). On their website, they list 101 screen-free activities, and 55 nature activities, also translated into Spanish. Another thought is to promote the list and see how many students can complete.

Mimi Godwin BOE Retirement

Angel had shared with Christina that Mimi Godwin will be retiring from the Board of Education after many years of service, and Angel thought it would be nice to do something from the PTA to thank her. Angel was also going to speak with Mr. Borsari. Christina asked if anyone had ideas, to let her know.

Committee Updates

Diversity, Inclusion & Equity Committee: Fay noted that the group has had 4 listening sessions to-date with the Hispanic community, each with 3-6 families in each, which were an hour long. Attendees were eager to speak, and thankful to have the forum. Many of the parents want to help their children with their education, though they work long hours and have little time and flexibility to help. Many were not familiar with the PTA. She noted three main take-aways:

1. **Communication** - the groups were not clear as to what the PTA does, what the dues money goes towards, and what parents get in return for joining.
2. **Lack of inclusion** - language is a large challenge. The sessions were entirely in Spanish, but that is atypical. They noted our website isn't in Spanish, calls aren't in Spanish, etc.
3. **Need more support** - the parents noted that they routinely have problems with kids in school (ie grades, assignments, relationships, etc), and they don't know who to talk to about the issues to help their children.

Christina shared that Daphne had learned that there may be literacy issues in the Hispanic community, so translated flyers don't always help. A suggestion is to share information via video with verbal translation if/where needed.

The next step is to build a roadmap on what changes we should make in the PTA. The plan, once drafted and approved, is submitted to the National PTA and is due in April. There is a template that the National PTA will provide.

Rivertown Parents: Mitch shared that Thursday February 25th is the presentation of All You Need to Know, But Were Afraid to Ask - Internet Security and Safety. Ardsley is hosting. Not too late to sign up and join! This presentation will not be translated or recorded.

School Updates

JP: Krista shared updates from the last meeting with Mrs. Barnett. They had asked if Mrs. Barnett is observing teachers while teaching, particularly this year with hybrid and remote learning, which she is. Mrs. Barnett was going to be asking teachers what aspects of hybrid or remote learning they would want to continue to use when we go back to all in-person learning. She believes there are learnings and positive developments that can be carried forward to future years.

Morse: Christina P shared take-away's from the last meeting with Mr. Walley. There was discussion about the elementary outdoor book fair. Mr. Walley likes the idea and is happy to help where he can. They discussed the clothing drive, and the awarded mini grants. There is a new security guard to replace Brad. She does rounds more frequently, and the front desk covers during these times. If she is out for the day, the security firm she works with sends out a back-up. There was discussion about the food bags that are being distributed, that many families would prefer not to have it, preferring it to go to a more needy home. The Trip Around the Community will take place in some sort of fashion, even if it's just a trip around the parking lot. There was discussion about engaging second-graders as well, given they missed out on this activity last year.

WI: Lauren noted that many of the topics are similar to the Morse discussion. Food distribution is Tuesday and Friday. The kids are asked if they would like to bring home food, whereas at Morse the kids are simply given it. Mr. Holland checked his records, and he didn't see that he'd used his PTA Principal Funds, but was going to check in with Joy Myke about this as it could be mis-classified. Lauren suggested other VP's check with their respective principals.

MS: Mechtid noted that their next meeting is Friday February 26. In the last meeting, there was discussion on new Covid procedures on who needs to quarantine. Lockers are still not able to be used to diminish hallway crowding, which many kids do not like as they then have to wear or carry their coats all day, and thus choose to not wear coats at all. There was also some discussion around mini-grant timing, asking if the process can be moved earlier in the year. Christina asked Mechtid to clarify with Mr. Whitham why it's a problem for the middle school when the other schools all seem to manage with the current timeline in their next meeting.

Meeting Adjourned

Before closing, Lauren raised a final comment that chairs are needed for JP and the MS for Staff Appreciation Lunches, which take place the first week in May.

Christina closed the meeting at 9:32, asking everyone to keep their eyes open for emails on the various topics discussed. The next board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday March 24th at 7:30pm.