



PF Meeting 4/23/15

Start time 6:24pm

End time 7:58pm

Officers present: 5 (Megan Swann, John Ezbiansky, Anne Cummins, Renee Samuel and Kerri O'Boyle)

Number of attendees: 27

Next parent forum meeting will be moved to Thursday May 21, 2015 at 6:15pm

Approval of minutes from last month: yes

Fundraising

Box Tops are on-going. There will be a pizza party for the class with the most.

Updates on **Montage Concert Series**: We're on the list as perspective organization, need a minimum of 6 volunteers to work a booth. Online training is available, takes about 45 minutes to an hour and certification lasts for 3 years. We can work baseball games and Penguins hockey games as well. We are waiting on them to get liquor license and then we will get a link from Legends to begin online training.

Family fun event: Thursday May 7th from 6-8 at The Adventure Zone. There will be two stations, separated by age. \$8 per child with a small portion coming back to the PF.

Yearbook: Susan Hynds is leading fundraising campaign. There are 18 ads paid for so far \$880. If you have paid for an ad but have not sent in picture/message to Susan, please do so. Karoline Mehalchick also heading committee. She needs help for 1st grade and up, pictures are needed. The link will be sent out again.

Afterschool enrichment programs...finally have green light to begin. Pilot program through spring. Committee needs to meet again.

School store...looking for renewed interest and more volunteers; serves as a great asset to the school for practical learning for the students. Let Anne Cummins know if you would like to volunteer. Ideas... Smencils, notebooks, etc.

Career Day May 27th 8-11am. Participants still being accepted by Jade. 17 volunteers have already committed. Presenters will be given tips and information packets.

Field Day Friday June 5th, rain date Wed June 10th. Save the date will be sent out for volunteers soon so people can still have time to obtain clearances.

Teacher request forms...Renee requested Mr. Scoops ice cream truck for end of year reward for positive behavior reinforcement \$360 (\$1.40 per kid) in May. Request approved by those present.

Treasurer Report ending balance as of 4/12/15 is \$10,770.47

PFO elections: Cindy Cox elected as PF vice president for a 2 year term

Kristin McCann elected as PF secretary for a 2 year term

Staff Presentation: Jeri Hubbard (Title 1 Reading and Math) ...April is National Poetry Month; Jeri attended a professional development workshop at the University of Scranton about the reading crisis in America. Numbers are getting larger of those that cannot read. It is a public health problem. UofS has a program to promote literacy for all children. It takes a village to get children to read. It's a shared responsibility. This year, health care providers are being targeted to get messages out to clients/patients on how to get books to children and stress that it starts from birth. Future targets will be churches, volunteer groups, libraries, media, early childhood centers. Next year will target PTAs. Demographics are changing as we grow. Poverty is a big factor. A great majority of kids aren't exposed to books and words outside of the home. Others aren't having people read to them. How can we reach out and help those kids? Parents, teachers and community are all involved.

Jeri recommends Readingrockets.org for parents, librarians and teachers as a great resource.

Suggestion to have the Kindness club can get a book donation going. Or kids can write kind messages and the Albright library will put them in the books.

Q and A HGMICS Board & Administration...board members have traditionally come to a board meeting at the end of the year to share visions and ideas about the future of our school. We asked for any concerns and questions in advance to allow time for the board to prepare an answer.

Board members present: Susan Trussler, Professor of Economics at the University of Scranton, former parent and president of the board; Dr. Fran Langan, Professor and Chair of Education department at Keystone College; and Lou Nivert, President of Nivert Metal. Three of the current members of the board are former PFOs.

(Susan) Board meeting minutes are not approved until the month after and then they are posted to the school website. There is a 5-week lag until the current information is posted. Ideally, PFOs should be present at the public portion of the board meeting to report on major news at the next PF meeting. The

bylaws of a charter school differ from the discovery school which is why Ellen Yuscavage, a current parent, is still on the board. There is a rotation of the board members so there are 2 three year terms as a maximum which you can rotate off or switch positions. Ellen will rotate off in June. It was said that the board has to act with no self-interest and having a parent on the board would not allow for that, as they would have their own agendas for their family. Too many topics need to remain confidential. Advice of legal officials and other boards led the board to the decision to not have a parent on the board.

Q: Parent asked then if it is the responsibility a PFO to relay back what was discussed at the public school board meeting? If they were on the board, that might be the best way to share information, but it is a lot of responsibility for any parent who went to a public school board meeting to share that information with all the parents of the school. A suggestion was that Maria or board themselves share information with parents since they have direct access to parents.

Q: Parent asked that even if the prospective parent were to sign a document committing themselves and their allegiance to the board, as a board member, and to keep all information discussed during the board confidential, would a parent representative be allowed to be on the board? She suggested that on other Boards that she sits the board members show/sign loyalty to that board and then their 'best interest' is not in question – as if it is the responsibility of the job.

Q: Isn't parental involvement in the school part of how we got the charter? There is increased restriction of volunteers and parents in the school which conflicts with what the charter school was.

A: (Susan) The laws are changing but it is not intentional to exclude parents. (Fran) The emerging board is attempting to build a culture. We went from a noninstitutionalized school to an institution. Families should feel they are valued. The board is building a "culture" for the new and emerging school. She invites questions to be brought to the board. And the public should come to the meetings. Mentioned enrichment programs...any parent is a mandated reporter and a course needs to be completed and you need clearances. People have responsibility of their own skills to share and to be a mandated reporter.

Q: Parent said that PF communicates a list issues/topics when we meet with Maria...is the info getting funneled through to the board by Maria? A number of the questions and concerns submitted by the parents and shared with the school/board for this meeting were previously discussed with Maria and/or at the parent forum meetings. They are not necessarily new issues/new business. Why is a PFO or parent representative not a part of the board - It can help ensure that the information be communicated clearly and in a timely manner?

A: (Fran) Issues should be filtered through Maria. They can also be brought up at the public board meeting. It may be that Maria doesn't bring all issues, namely the smaller ones, to the table for discussion among the board. Stated that there needs to be an intentionality to address issues from the board. The board acts as a guide, an opportunity for those that run the school to come up with the most appropriate solution for the school. If they don't know, they seek out people to help. There are 2 meetings...an executive meeting at 6:00 and the public meeting is scheduled at 6:30 but sometimes does not begin on time.

Q: To that question parent asked if the parent were to go to Maria with questions/comments or to the Board?

A: (Fran) Fran said that parents should do both – voice to Maria and at Board meeting.

Q: Is the agenda publicized prior to the meeting?

A: (Susan) No, the board gets the agenda of the public school board meeting the day of the meeting. Maria reports on school issues and anything can be brought up at the meeting. Maria and Susan speak weekly about any issues.

(Fran) The biggest problem is communication...it needs to happen more frequently. The board is tossing around the idea of an informal newsletter with policies and information on a regular basis.

Pam Kobierecki asked if Fran would explain what "looping" is. (Fran) Looping is keeping the same students in a classroom for two years with the same teacher. The first 6 weeks of most school years is spent becoming acquainted with the students and how they learn, etc. Kids already know each other and what is expected in looping. HG has family groupings so different ages mentor each other and the older ones teach the younger ones.

Q: Is there a tax lien on the school?

A: (Susan) The tax lien on the school was alarming to see in the paper. The state made a mistake with regards to the PA Labor and Industry Unemployment Education tax. The transition between the discovery school and MI school caused issues. There was a week or two transition and at this time there was a retroactive change in the unemployment tax rate while we were changing schools. We paid by their deadline but the state forgot to enter something in the books which came through as a lien and interest was accruing. It was an error on the part of the state and there was never a lien. This issue was addressed at a Board Meeting but the minutes did not come up until a month later. In the future, Maria will let the parents know about topics like that by email.

Parent commented that the parent body would have appreciated that information months ago shortly after it appeared in the newspaper. Until this meeting, parents on the whole were not informed by the school why there was a tax lien and that it was a "mistake". Cited it as an example for the school/board to be more intentional in sharing and communicating information with parents.

Q: What is going on with the lower lot?

A: (Susan) We are still trying to sell the lower lot. Currently on third realtor and price has been dropped. The board is thinking about other options now, i.e. creative ways of funding to use the lower lot as playing fields or gardens. We can't do it now because of the buildings on the lot. The board is asking for bids on removal of the buildings. If you know anyone, give names to Maria or the board.

Q: Are you concerned with Gov. Wolf's suggested changes related to Charter Schools? Do we have a plan to deal with the changes if they go through?

A: (Susan) Governor Wolf is targeting cyber schools. He has no objection to well-functioning brick and mortar charter schools. He targets for profit, under-performing charter schools, especially cyber charters and fund balances (excess profits). Cyber schools have enormous revenues and fund balances because they have little fixed costs they are responsible for. He wants an 8-12% limit on fund balances to carry over year to year. I do not believe we will be targeted by Wolf. On Friday May 8th, there is a training for admins of charter schools across the state. PA coalition of charter schools which will be attended by Maria and board members.

Q: As a professional in the science field, I think our science program is lacking. What is the science curriculum and the credentials of the teacher? Young kids should be excited by science and intrigued to learn what science encompasses. My child is not being stimulated and it is a missed opportunity.

A: (Susan) Qualifications of Megan Wolf is a right-to-know issue and you can come individually to find that out from Maria. (Maria) Foss science program is what the curriculum is based on. (Pam) Megan W. got a scholarship to learn more about environmental sciences.

Q: What can you tell us about the new classroom?

A: (Susan) We used to struggle to keep 140 students. There used to be one class for each grade level except PP. When we changed to a charter school, the long term goal was 255 students with 2 classrooms at every age group except PP. We couldn't grow to that size overnight. There was an incremental planning phase to build the school. Building from 2 intermediate, 2 uppers and 2 senior classes. We will reach capacity this year in the upcoming school year for two senior classrooms. There are 10-12 new spaces which will be filled by lottery. Fundraising from golf tournament will go to this cause. Additional teachers and supplies are needed for this to happen.

A Parent suggested to put in the tentative newsletter/letter of communication that was mentioned previously by board member (Fran) are the school's plans/projections for the future, which could facilitate better communication.

Q: What is the update on the principal search?

A: (Susan) A letter was sent to the families that it was a failed search so far and Maria and Pam will continue on for another academic year 2015/2016. The search is ongoing but it is the wrong time of year to be hunting. Ads will flourish in Sept. with an application deadline in November so next January, applicants would be brought into the school and the hire would come in February/March.

Any other questions/concerns not previously sent to the Board?

Q: The amount of sugar given out to the kids in school as rewards, snacks, treats is a problem as well as the long-term effects of refined sugars. What is the proper forum to bring up this issue?

A: (Susan) Take up with Maria and then Maria can speak to the teachers.

Q: Will the expansion of the PP class effect the extended day?

A: (Maria) No, extended day is not affected.

Q: Where do we stand with common core and did kids opt out of PSSA testing?

A: (Susan) We can't have a stand as a school but as a state. We go by common core standards of the state. (Maria) No students opted out. If you opt out, it hurts the school if the participation rate is low.

Closing thoughts...

Potholes...what is being done? There have been some repairs. Patching was done this morning.

Jade... Math and Reading PSSAs: students did well. Over \$700 raised in a penny drive by the students. 3 students played at Carnegie hall. One went to states for skiing. Lower property was cleaned for earth day. Career day 5/27 and 7th and 8th graders are going to career link center; cross-country just ran second race.