

Mamaroneck Council of PTAs Meeting Minutes
November 9, 2015
MHS N101

- I. The meeting was called to order.

- II. Guest speaker, NY Senator George Latimer
 - Senator Latimer, who represents the district that covers from Yonkers to Bedford, was invited to speak to the PTC.
 - In January, the Legislation will be back in session and Governor Cuomo will deliver the State of the State speech in which education will be a main part. On Common Core, Senator Latimer is advocating to empower local ownership and initiative and to reduce mandatory testing to transition years.
 - He is also working to restore GAP funding -- the State aid to Districts which has been slow to be restored in wealthier Districts like ours.
 - On tax cap, he is advocating the cap to be coupled with significant mandatory relief.
 - The State budget process will close at the end of March, so Feb is the key month for advocacy from parents. Parents should know that the legislator like him is our representative, and that he should be considered to be an ally to work with in lobbying Albany and Board of Regents; not being on the side of Albany.
 - He concluded his remarks by recognizing the “tremendous resources around the table” and congratulating the PTA leadership.
 - In a comment, Senator Latimer was thanked for demonstrating his support for the “opt-out” movement and that he is on the right side of the issue.
 - It was suggested that a stack of letters from parents/community is always a very effective visual to make a case of community’s position on issues. Unfortunately, merit of the argument is not always enough, so sending letters/emails is always encouraged.

- III. The minutes of the meeting on October 19, 2015 were approved.

- IV. Treasury Report
 - All the checks from PTAs have been deposited.
 - As reported earlier, there is a USD6000 surplus that is recommended to be spent down.

- V. Report from Co-Presidents
 - As a way to spend the surplus funds, it was proposed that PTC funds the District-wide speaker, Mr Ron Lieber, the author of the "The Opposite of Spoiled", a book on helping parents teach kids about money and values. He has agreed to speak for a fee of \$2300, and PTC had originally budgeted \$1500 for a speaker. The proposed date is February 23rd at either the HMX auditorium or MHS auditorium. SEPTA asked if their speaker could also be supported if a need arises and it was agreed that we should.

- There was a motion to approve the funding for the speaker and the motion carried unanimously. MHS Co-Presidents agreed that they will lead the work for this speaker program. It was suggested that an app called “Eventbrite” is a useful tool.

VI. Board of Education (BOE) Update

- The BOE unanimously recommended to proceed with the proposed Physical Ed Bond, but it will be for 9.3 million USD (downs from 11.6 million USD) taking out the Hommocks pool locker renovation for now. This work will be considered in connection with the required 5-year facilities review. The official resolution will be passed at the next BOE meeting. The capital projects are planned to take place in the summer of 2017.
- A new topic proposed for future discussion is the idea of having one centralized voting venue, e.g. MHS, instead of four elementary schools, which is the current arrangement. Considering the current cost of operating four sites and the newly available voting technologies, it is worth having a discussion.
- A question on the overall space availability throughout the District against the increasing enrollment was raised. Melany responded that the Board intends to have a thorough review to assess the future enrollment and the actual space available throughout the District in the next two months.
- Other issues that are currently on the agenda: on the issue of student achievement, how to support families and students in poverty continues to be a challenge; the Board takes granting tenure for teachers seriously - when hiring new teachers, serious consideration for their potential for growth is given, but sometimes, they do not become a good fit.
- Melany thanked SEPTA for organizing the recent session on co-teaching, which was well attended and was well-received.
- Going forward, Nov 17 BOE meeting will pass the resolution on the PE bond; will continue to discuss the needs analysis for the health center; summer programs; and the auditing requirement to the State.
- In Dec and Jan, budget review will commence; will take up math instruction and system challenges commensurate with possible increased enrollment.
- A question was asked about accommodating the increased enrollment by potentially building additional classrooms; the Board and the District continue to monitor enrollment to determine whether the recent increase is a blip or something that needs to be addressed on longer-term basis.
- A waiver for the APPR teacher evaluation has been filed and accepted.

VII. SEPTA Report

- Among the many SEPTA-sponsored events held Oct-Nov is the “Transition Fair” where a dozen vendors came together to showcase various services, ranging from housing to job training, to support special-needs students post high school. Families from neighboring Districts were invited.
- Modeled after Superintendent’s Coffee, SEPTA hosted a “Nightcap” event where more than 20 people attended. Thanks were extended to the host of the event.

- As reported by Melany, a presentation on co-teaching was received very well, attended by more than 50 people, including those without classified children. District's New Director for Special Education and four pairs of co-teaching teachers spoke, among others.
- Building Bridges at Murray was once again a big success.
- Upcoming events include "Appy Hour", an event that was originally conceived to showcase educational apps for special education but now include educational apps for all students; Turkey Trot, a Village of Mamaronek event which is a big fundraiser for SEPTA; "Road to College", an informational event specifically designed for special needs student to prepare for college.

VIII. Communication Update

- The recent email blast on the PE Bond was sent to 500 addresses, resulting in more than 100 clicks, and even a several leading to the PTC website.
- It was suggested that we should think about a coherent communication strategy aimed to raise awareness about the bond followed by the budget – a consistent messaging that complements the District's communication. Some messages, e.g. on PE bond, are best coming from the PTC instead of District.
- It was pointed out that some issues/messages are better received if they come from the individual PTA unit that is most affected by it; PTC should advocate for the entire District. The Council should develop a more universal message which then can be tailored by individual PTA to be disseminated to their parent community.
- The messages have been successful and are most effective when adding parents' perspective – by "Davidetizing" it! Again, PE Bond email was a great example of that.
- After Nov 17 passage of official resolution on PE Bond, there will be more communication on upcoming tours; students are producing a video to add their perspective. Important points to cover are: that theft is a serious problem; tax is not going up because of this bond; balance the message of urgency vs how old and out of code the buildings are.
- David and Debbie will continue to coordinate to make sure the calendar of upcoming communication plans are in sync.

The meeting adjourned at 10:55am. Some participants joined the tour of the PE spaces that will be covered by the PE Bond.

In Attendance:

PT Council

Pam Buchmueller, President
 Kim Tucker, President-Elect
 Keiko Tannenbaum, Secretary
 David Seigerman, Communication

Gail Julie, Legislation

George Latimer, NY State Senator

Unit School PTAs

Joan Capaldi, MHS PTA President

Tina Maresca, HMX PTA President

Jenny Ransom, HMX PTA President-Elect

Jackie Emmet, HMX PTA President-Elect

Krista Williams, PTA Central President

April Lewis, Chatsworth PTA President

Jackie Shurslep, Chatsworth PTA President-Elect

Melanie Kraut, Murray PTA President-Elect

Sarah Coady, MAS PTA President-Elect

Liz Paras, SEPTA President

Sandy Wu, SEPTA President-Elect

District

Melany Gray, Board of Education Liaison

Debbie Manetta, Director of Communications

HMX PTA Board

Romy Kirwin

Jessica Thorpe

Alexandra Leach

Sherry Gench Thaler