

Ridgewood High School Home and School Association

Meeting Minutes for March 8, 2011

In Attendance: Diana Capetola, Michele Lenhard, Ruth Parks, Gerald Bucci, Karen Stires, Anne Robinson, Brownyn McElroy, Cristy Sippel, Christine Shippee, Terry Caliendo, Kelly Coakley, Suzanne Golabek, Patty Garr, Liz Gordon, Jocelyn Dreier, Maria-Dolores Saiz, Francisco DeLeon, Lindsey Barclay, Tracy Autera, Gina McDade, Shannon Andrews, Haejin Gil, Sandra Ho, Angela Chang, Linda Tarzian, Lisa Gibble, Arty Freed, Linda Diorio, Jaime Federich, Vicky Herbert, Joyce Suss, Lynn Granski, Sara Erwin, Arlene Sarappo, Theresa Callaghan, Tina Telesco, Jack Lorenz, Basil Pizutto, Jeff Nyhuis

Welcome and Approval of Minutes: Arlene Sarappo, President of HSA, welcomed everyone to the meeting. The minutes from February 8, 2011 meeting were approved. Arlene noted that the NBC Evening News had that evening featured Ridgewood and the homework free break that had been the result of the feedback from the numerous showings of the “Race to Nowhere” documentary. Those interested in seeing the news segment can watch it online.

Principal’s Report: Jack Lorenz gave an update on recent and upcoming events at RHS.

The Sophomore Semi-Formal Dance was “incident free”.

Information sessions for current sophomores and juniors, interested in applying to be peer advisors, in the Peer Counseling Program will be held on March 16 and March 17. Because many qualified students apply for the positions, the process is competitive.

The spring sports season has begun. It is great to see the student athletes out on the new turf fields.

There was great dialogue at the recent faculty meeting regarding stress, homework and scheduling. Much feedback has been gathered from the faculty in recent weeks since the showing of “Race to Nowhere”. The administration and teachers are in the process of compiling the input and proposing pilot programs. Many parents have expressed appreciation for being part of the dialogue sessions with RHS students and staff regarding homework, expectations and stress. The process has been a positive one, with all vested members allowed to share and listen.

Jack had a productive meeting with the Ridgewood Guild about partnering to host “Late Night Ridgewood”. The concept would be to attract teenagers to “downtown” on Friday and Saturday nights by hosting bands and comedy shops at different venues. Offering reduced movie ticket prices and restaurant meals could also be part of the incentive to help reinvigorate the downtown area.

Dave Madden, a former RHS student, who became well known for his very successful run on Jeopardy, has developed the “History Bowl”. Last year RHS hosted the first ever, History Bowl. This year the competition, which will be taking place next week, is being held around the country.

Jack would like to thank the HSA for its generous financial support this year. Arlene Sarappo, will expand on the items that have been “gifted” to RHS from the HSA.

Assistant Principal's Reports

Basil Pizzuto, Assistant Principal for Administration and Student Services, gave an update of student activities at RHS. The Sophomore Semi- Formal which was recently held on a week night was \$20/person—less expensive than if it had been held on a Friday or Saturday night. The attendance was lower than last year, but the kids who attended enjoyed themselves.

The Administration is looking into having presentations for the students on alcohol awareness as well as driving and texting.

The Code of Conduct for Athletes and Extra Curricular Activities that many schools require their students to sign are being scrutinized throughout the State of NJ regarding their legal implications. There is debate as to what can and cannot be legally enforced when students and parents sign a Code of Conduct.

Jeff Nyhuis, Assistant Principal for Guidance, Curriculum and Instruction, reported that the Junior HSPA testing that took place last week went very smoothly. The next College Speaker Series presentation will be March 23. This is a wonderful program sponsored by the REF and the HSA. Juniors and their parents are strongly encouraged to attend.

HSA Executive Board Reports

Arlene Sarappo, HSA President, noted that the HSA has raised over \$24,000 this year through dues, gifts and matching funds from employers. A list was distributed specifying what the HSA has been able to fully fund or partially support including: an anti-bullying assembly for students; 2 screenings of Race to Nowhere; the College Speaker Series, professional training for the RHS Athletic Trainer; student laptops; Genesis, the school's literary magazine; new lecterns and a support system for the staging platforms used in the Campus Center and the Little Theater; two refrigerator/freezers for the Foods Classroom, and attendance at The National Guidance Counselors' Annual Conference for some of the RHS guidance counselors.

Last year, the HSA Development Campaign raised \$15,000. About 9% of the 1,100 families at RHS contributed towards the campaign. In contrast, the Ridgewood elementary schools can raise \$100,000 for playgrounds, air conditioning and technology with far fewer families enrolled at those schools.

The RHS HSA realizes that its parents very generously support the extracurricular activities at RHS including Marching Band, Choir, New Players, Sports teams....Until the last couple of years, the parents have not been organized to address the academic needs at RHS that cannot be supported by the current budget (i.e. smart boards, laptops....)

Tina Telesco, Development Chairperson, announced that the HSA is trying a new approach to fundraising this year with a Phone-a-thon that will take place March 29, 30 and 31. A letter explaining the fundraising campaign is being mailed out to all RHS families. If every family made a contribution, of even \$50, the funds raised could make a big difference for our students! Please carefully read the letter and see where the money will be directed.

Presentation: Making Sense of Skyward's Open Grade Book

Jeff Nyhuis demonstrated the information that is accessible to parents and students via Skyward. One can see what is happening at RHS via the Calendar; parents can track their student's progress in each class; and teachers can post homework assignments and announcements. Progress reports will be posted for each student in each class on March 15. Teachers will also have a comment for every student in every class on the progress reports. Students should use Skyward to see if they have any missing assignments in a class. Student's attendance can also be found on Skyward.

Naviance is still used at RHS for College Planning, reporting of GPAs, ACT and SAT scores.

Skyward is a tool that parents should use to communicate with their child. Parents need to be careful not to focus on a student's grade at a particular time. Class grades are fluid throughout the quarter and one must remember at the start of a quarter, with minimal assignments and tests yet having been given and recorded, a low grade can easily be pulled up through further assignments and test scores. Parents should concentrate on the teachers' comments which reflect the student's efforts and attitude.

Faculty Update

Ruth Parks and Diana Capetola thanked the HSA for the food and beverages at the last faculty meeting.

Board of Education Update

Michele Lenhard informed parents that the BOE is in the final weeks of preparing the 2011/2012 school budget. The final budget hearing will be March 28. The Ridgewood schools did receive \$849,000 in State Aid this year that had been cut from last year's budget. As of Monday night, the budget is balanced with no cuts in staff or reductions in courses. The BOE is pleased with the amount of savings across the district over the past year including \$100,000 in reduced fees for internet and phone usage.

Election Day is April 27 for the School Budget and the two open seats on the BOE.

The BOE sat through a presentation on the possibility of converting to solar power at some of its schools. This is something the BOE is looking into for the future.

The Fields Committee presented its second draft of the Field Use Policy to the BOE last night.

Committee and Liaison Updates

HSA Nominating Committee / Chairperson Lynn Granski - The Nominating Committee is putting together the proposed slate for the 2011/2012 HSA Executive Board. If you would like to be considered for one of the positions, or if you would like to nominate someone, please contact Lynn within the next week.

Project Graduation 2011 / Co-chairs Arty Freed & Lisa Gobble –

The Fashion Show, Project Graduation's major fundraiser, is March 27. All are welcome to attend! 160 seniors signed up to model this year. A silent auction, with over 80 items to bid on, will take place prior to the students going down the runway.

Lord and Taylor is hosting a fundraiser at its store on April 7 for Project Graduation. Please see the RHS eNews for detailed information.

Class of 2012 / Parent Rep. Terry Caliendo – April 30 is Band Night at Blend for parents. Tickets can be purchased at the door. All proceeds will go the Class of 2012 fund.

Library Legacy Program / Coordinator Linda Diorio – Diane Capetola, the RHS Librarian, has prepared a Wish List of books and materials requested by the English and Social Studies teachers at RHS. The Wish List and the Library Legacy Program forms to contribute to the RHS library are posted on the RHS Website under the Library.

Ridgewood Education Foundation / President Liz Gordon – The Spring grants have been announced and are posted on the REF website.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

The next meeting will take place at 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, April 5 in the RHS Library.

Respectfully submitted by Lynn Granski