

Ridgewood High School Home and School Association

Meeting Minutes for May 10, 2011

In attendance: Maryam Alsop, David Zrike, Bamini Pillai, Rola Baddoura, Lynn Granski, Mary Casale, Lynn Knight, Jan Hurley, Anne Robinson, Diana Capetola, Jeff Nyhuis, Ruth Parks, Larry Resnick, Jane Stone, Vicky Herbert, Elizabeth Gordon, Jaime Frederick, Sara Erwin, Ines Bunza, Emily Young, Arlene Sarappo

Welcome and Approval of Minutes: Arlene Sarappo, President of the HSA, welcomed everyone to the meeting, including the returning RHS student alumni who would present later in the evening. The minutes from the April 5, 2011 meeting were approved.

Assistant Principal's Report: Jeff Nyhuis gave an update on recent and upcoming events at RHS.

A total of 943 Advanced Placement exams will be administered at RHS this year. Many students sit for multiple exams on the same day, including language exams that can last up to five hours. About 700 exams have been taken so far.

The NJ State End-of-Course Biology examination for 9th graders will be administered on May 17 and 18. There will be a delayed opening at 10:15 a.m. for all other students. The NJ State End-of-Course Algebra exam will be administered on May 23 for all students enrolled in Algebra. Freshmen who have completed Algebra in middle school do not need to sit for the exam. Jeff reports that New Jersey is in the process of transitioning to a Regents Exam model. Additionally, the state HESPA exams will be administered for one more year before state educational administrators decide whether or not to continue the test.

The Freshman Semi-Formal Dance was "incident free" and well attended, with more than 300 9th graders participating.

Jeff recently has invited students to work with RHS administrators in a Principal's Advisory group. Topics discussed include student stress, cheating, grades, homework, the pressure to take AP classes, finding the right college fit, and ways to improve student life at school. Kerry Huntington, the district's representative for Social and Emotional Learning, will provide input to this group, as well as offer ideas for teachers about ways to relieve pressure on kids. Jeff emphasized the importance of good communication between home and school and the need for support from teachers, parents, coaches, club advisors, and administrators to help our kids lead healthy, balanced lives. Students have commented to Jeff that they highly value a teacher's effort to be fair and flexible.

Further discussion focused on the demands of extracurricular activities at RHS and the expectations by coaches and club advisors of long hours of dedication by team members and participants. Parents expressed frustration at trying to help children achieve a balance between pursuing their interests and finding time to complete homework assignments and prepare adequately for tests. Teacher Ruth Parks commented that while

teachers have made an effort to reduce homework, some students may require extra studying and practice at home to prepare for tests. Other suggestions by parents included posting homework assignments in advance and expanding course descriptions in the syllabus so that students will have a better understanding of the workload before registering for the class.

Upcoming Junior Guild Events: Parent David Zrike gave a summary of upcoming events planned by *Back Woods*, a group of 10 students working with RHS administrators, the HSA, and the Ridgewood Guild. The goal of this group is to plan enjoyable, safe events on Friday and Saturday nights for Ridgewood youth. The first event will be a Band Slam on May 20 in Van Neste Park. David expects 300-400 students to attend. The cost is \$5 per person. The Ridgewood Police will provide supervision, along with 20 parent volunteers. Village eateries such as the Daily Treat, It's Greek to Me, Best of Everything, and Häagen-Daz will stay open late during *Back Woods* events. Please visit the *Back Woods* link on the RHS school website for more information on future events.

College Student Panel: Jeff Nyhuis introduced five recent RHS alumni who shared their first year college experiences with the audience in a question/answer format.

The college students answered questions regarding transition to college, academic preparedness, workload and time management, and extra curricular activities. In general, they agreed that they were well prepared by the RHS teachers and curriculum for their college coursework. Many felt that although the course work at college was challenging and demanding, the flexibility of college class schedules gave them more control over how they spent their time. The students offered reflections on their college application processes, and also commented on the experiences of being waitlisted, taking a gap year, choosing roommates, meeting friends, and pledging fraternities.

HSA Executive Board Reports:

President Arlene Sarappo summarized reports from the most recent Federated meeting. Construction and renovation projects around the district continue, including interior work to be done this summer at RHS. Superintendent Daniel Fishbein has formed a Board of Education Legislative Committee made up of educators, concerned citizens, and representatives from the Board, in order to more closely follow education related matters in Trenton.

Federated made a donation of \$1100 to the RHS HSA, which will go toward the new Learning Commons. Tina Telesco will coordinate fundraising for this project from the community and RHS next year.

Arlene noted that \$54,000 was raised from the RHS Phone-a-thon, including a matching grant from the Ridgewood Education Foundation. Monies will be used to purchase new digital microscopes and computers for school.

HSA Treasurer Ines Bunza thanked the RHS Class of 1995 for their generous donation of \$561.84. The money was used to purchase laptop computers for Project Graduation record keeping and accounting.

Ines requests that all receipts for reimbursement be submitted as soon as possible. She will close out the books for this school year on June 30.

Ines and Jeff Nyhuis also thanked the Korean Parent Association for their generous donation of \$2000 to the HSA which allowed three RHS guidance counselors to attend a National Conference of Guidance Counselors earlier this year.

The following were recently purchased by the HSA: digital microscopes with cameras (\$21,000); a new refrigerator for the Foods Department (\$2000); computers (\$5350); stage platforms for the Little Theater (\$4100).

New lecterns for the Campus Center will be purchased shortly.

Faculty Representative Ruth Parks reported that 23 exchange students from France recently completed their visit to Ridgewood. The students were hosted by RHS families.

HSA Student Representative Kelly gave a student perspective of recent events at RHS, including Spirit Week (Wild West Wednesday was a hit), AP exams, and SAT subject tests. Kelly noted that students taking exams miss a lot of class time, and that flexibility and understanding from teachers is greatly appreciated.

Nominating Committee Chairperson Lynn Granski explained the procedure for moving forward with next year's HSA Executive Board. According to RHS HSA by-laws, the slate of new members would be presented at tonight's meeting, with voting to take place at the next meeting in June.

The positions for next year's Executive Board are as follows:

HSA President, Jaime Frederick

1st Vice President, Jack Lorenz

2nd Vice President, Tracy Autera

Secretary, Mary Casale

Treasurer, Lynn Knight

Assistant Treasurer, Theresa Callaghan

Communications Co-chairs, Beth Holmes and Linda Willk

Development Chair, David Zrike

Lynn added that 40 volunteer positions for parents still remain available on the Board. Please see the directory for a complete list of positions if you are interested in helping out.

Project Graduation 2011 Co-Chair Arty Freed reported that preparations are "full speed ahead" in the coming weeks. A meeting for parents of seniors will take place tomorrow night at 7:30 p.m. in the Campus Center. All parents who are interested in learning more

about the prom, graduation, and Project Graduation events should plan to attend. Cookbooks and fashion DVDs are still available for purchase.

Class of 2012 Representative Terry Caliendo reported on the success of the parent event at Blend, which raised \$4000 for the junior class. The Class of 2012 is pleased to announce next year's Project Graduation Co-chairs, Kelly Coakley and Lindsey Barclay.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:08 p.m.

The next HSA meeting will take place on Tuesday, June 14, 2011 at 7:30 p.m. in the Ridgewood High School Library.

Respectfully submitted by Emily Young