

## **RHS HSA Meeting April 8, 2008**

Following a tour of the Carroll Art Gallery and discussion with 2 senior art students, Laura Herzog and Rochelle BaRoss, about their Senior Portfolios, Frances Ekblom, President opened the Business Meeting.

### **Principal's Report—Jack Lorenz**

Jack Lorenz mentioned the numerous accolades RHS students have recently received. He announced that security measures are being modified, following a recent intruder incident at Indian Hills. They will be redeploying 1 security guard from 2-10 pm, so that there will be some coverage whenever the building is open. There will also be an office staff person after-hours, monitoring cameras in the main office. Some additional doors will be closed in the evenings. Only the Little Theater entrance will be open to parents during the day. Visitors will need to show ID. Parents may drop off items for students at the Security desk. RHS hasn't experienced a problem yet, but we want to prevent a bad situation—a letter will soon be going home to all parents detailing these changes to our security.

Robert Zuckerman, Photographer, will be visiting RHS soon. He takes rich and beautiful photos of everyday life. There will also be a narrative written to go with the photos. He will be arriving April 17 to work with the Digital Photo class. A Jr. English class will collaborate with them to produce the narrative.

### **Assistant Principal's Report--Peg Loonam**

The College Speaker Series is Wed, April 16. It will be a panel discussion—have not had one of this type in 5 years.

The Guidance Department is busy calling colleges with students on wait lists, trying to help them get looked at and off the wait lists. They are also working with Juniors now on their college lists. College night was well-attended.

May 19<sup>th</sup> is the first state science exam for first Biology course students—at RHS, this is in 9<sup>th</sup> grade.

May 5-16: AP Exams will be administered to many of our students. RHS' attendance policy will be changed next year; fewer absences will be allowed, but school-sanctioned trips will not be counted as absences.

Frances reported for the Development Committee. The 16 laptops purchased with funds raised by the committee have arrived.

Frances also gave Beth Abbott's report for Project Graduation. Lots of \$ was made from the Parent Social at Elks Club. Storage space to house PG items was generously donated by David Bolger and Bob Hutton.

The Nominating Committee, chaired by Beth Jorgensen, is still looking for a head of PG for next year. The slate for the RHS HSA Executive Board, 2008-2009 was announced:

Elizabeth Resnick, President

Wendy Wong, Treasurer

Lynn Granski, Secretary

Rola Baddoura, VP

### **Federated Report-Frances Ekblom**

Ines Bunza will again be President of Federated next year. Walk- or Bike-to-School month will be this May. There will be an Earth Day celebration after the baseball parade this coming Saturday.

Federated HSA's Cambodian project will receive \$2500 of the proceeds from the Wizards game; other recipients of this money include Swift Reach and Ridgewood Arts Foundation.

### **Board of Education Candidate Speeches**

Frances introduced the four candidates running for the Board of Education; voting for the two seats open takes place next Tuesday, April 15.

Greg Lois spoke first, passing out informational pamphlets. He stated that our school board has let us down—we need a Superintendent. A short term priority is to align our Elementary schools—content needs to be the same. He said other schools don't have this problem. A long term issue is our infrastructure and maintenance. Board has put it at the bottom—needs to be raised. Perhaps we need a second question. Tenaflly has much better facilities. He is running with Sarah-Kate Maskin. One can contact them through their website. He stated that this election gives us a chance to “take back the crown.”

Sarah-Kate Maskin spoke next. She is a teacher, with a degree in elementary education. She has been advocating for math program choice; we have 6 elementary schools using 3 different programs. She sees lots of room for improvement—she stated that we can do better. She said there are 2 additional critical issues: raising the bar (setting higher standards) and communication. She believes Ridgewood can do better with setting higher standards and raising the bar. What comes home in the backpack differs from school to school. Every school has its own culture and pulse, but we must unify the curriculum among schools. Mrs. Maskin wants the Board to be more transparent—we as taxpayers get selected information presented to us. There is a need to share accolades and concerns and not hide the problems. Board meeting minutes and budget should be up on the district website. She thinks we can do better.

Sheila Brogan spoke next. She is grateful to the RPS for her children's education. If after leaving the school system, our kids still want to learn, then we are doing a good job. Why is she running again? She has a passion for this district. We are not a failing district. We are second only to Bergen Academies for SAT scores in Math and 3<sup>rd</sup> for both reading and writing. Our college attendance rate is 96%. We need a Superintendent—an instructional leader. Regarding a math curriculum plan—we do have one for how to move forward. What happens in the classroom is the most important thing. Special education is necessary. Capital projects are important and we would like more \$ to get projects done; we are working on the HS right now. Next year work will take place inside RHS to repair ceilings and walls from the 1919 section of the building. There will be time and effort spent on articulation from 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade. 73 students are taking Calculus. 63

are in Math Analysis: we are growing the number of children who are taking the more rigorous math classes.

As far as communications are concerned, we are working on it. We are now webcasting the BOE meetings. All budget meetings are webcast so you can view the deliberations—all discussions and deliberations are done in that room. Sheila stated that she has asked for a “paperless BOE”. This would allow all background information to be on the web. Closed session materials will not be on the web, however. Please vote on April 15<sup>th</sup>. She has brought many new ideas to the district—reelecting her will be a voice for advocacy.

Laurie Goodman spoke on her candidacy for the BOE. She has wanted to serve for 10 years; she believes that she needs to serve her community and has more time in her life now. She is excited that this is a crossroads year. She is committed to kids and education: 10+ years of volunteering with the schools: Ridgewood Community Task Force, HSA President, Federated HSA, Task Force on Parent and Public Engagement—she has tried to improve communication between the district and the public. (Her work is in professional communications.) How do we connect the public to the district? This year it’s math; a few years ago it was an issue with Valley Hospital. We must have better communication, so things do not come out of left field. The Superintendent Search is also critical; she listed qualities that are crucial. Re communication, she thinks there could be more input from community members on committees. Board needs to have a receptive attitude toward community input. She spoke about study circles which have worked in other communities—studying issues in advance before problems occur. HSAs are a huge opportunity to get information to the public. An annual school report card would be an idea, allowing parents to rate aspects of our schools. This would help us find areas to address. Another issue that needs addressing is facilities and fields. More \$ needs to be allocated for facilities and fields. Some sort of extraordinary funding will be required in the next couple of years, perhaps a second question, to address the facilities and fields.

### **Budget Presentation--Angelo De Simone**

Of the 70 + communities in Bergen County, we have the 6<sup>th</sup> lowest tax levy. Cost per pupil is lower than the state average for K-12 districts. Mr. De Simone referred to the slide presentation put together which presents the budget for 2008-2009. We must take all students into our schools; we cannot be selective about who we take (based on cost to educate them.) Glen School is a good place for preschool kids with special needs. The PARCA program for autistic students is doing well. We will be adding a third section to the program in a year’s time. Small group music lessons are a real plus for our district; arts are a large part of our program--\$3 million. Arts are important to our district, as is Super Science Saturday. We have very good collaboration with the Village—lighting projects, snow removal, facilities study, e.g.

Ivy League and beyond acceptances are high. Participation in AP tests is high—only Millburn and Princeton/Cranbury are higher among J districts.

A large proportion of our population is school-aged; puts a lot of pressure on the district. We have identified 2 districts that have lower cost per student with slightly higher test scores.

Mr. De Simone spoke on the National Math Advisory Council report.

The effect of the tax reassessment in the Village: the average home will have an increase in \$338 in the school tax (\$42.16 per \$100,000 of assessed value.) The proposed school tax levy required to support the budget for 2008-2009 is \$75,238,284 (the increase requested is \$2,837,619.) We cannot count on Trenton for any big help financially.

The dedication of the parents and the community is something that makes our schools work. We are 92% self-funded through our taxes. Many unique things take place here: the REF, Jamboree, Xmas Tree Lighting, to name several.

The 2008-2009 budget supports the Arts, advances in technology, co-curricular offerings, initiatives in Social Studies and Math, Spanish texts, World Studies texts, Visual Basic text for Computer Science, and RAHP core texts, among others.

Mr. De Simone spoke on the upcoming capital projects for RHS. The new budget includes phases III and IV, including roof repairs and the upgrading of the electrical service. The drainage issue on the Beverly Road side will be addressed. The band ramp will be repaired. The HS has approximately \$18 million of repair and maintenance work to be done. Progress is being made—things are better than a couple of years ago. \$2 million in the budget doesn't go very far across the entire district.

Michele Lenhard of the BOE spoke about balancing the Board's priorities with sensitivity to the taxpayer. By having Mr. De Simone speak, the BOE is trying to address the financial needs of the district in relation to what is happening currently in the schools. Joe Vallerini spoke about how the Board comes to a consensus on what they feel are the priorities in relation to the budget; this is a balancing act. If the budget does not pass, the Village Council takes the budget and determines what they feel the appropriate number is to work with, how much is allowed. Email address is: [budget09.ridgewood.k12.nj.us](mailto:budget09.ridgewood.k12.nj.us).

#### **Treasurer's Report—Wendy Wong**

Wendy gave her report. Monies left over from PG 07 were given back to the HSA: \$688.91 refund.

Meeting adjourned at 9:43. Next meeting: May 6<sup>th</sup>.

Respectfully submitted,  
Hilary Jones

In attendance: Cristy Sippel, Karen Lorenz, Terri McAteer, Sara Erwin, Liz Gordon, Carol Rapaport, Lynn Granski, Roy Simpadian, Michele Lenhard, Joseph Vallerini, Eva Branton, Elizabeth Resnick, Frances Ekblom, Wendy Wong, Peg Loonam, Angelo De Simone, Jack Lorenz, Hilary Jones