

RHS Home and School Association Minutes September 18, 2007

Introductions

Frances Ekblom thanked the Executive Board and Jack and Karen Lorenz for their work over the summer—meetings, mailings, etc., etc.

Frances thanked the Hospitality Committee for providing the teachers and staff with Back to School goodies.

Frances introduced Tim Brennan, our new Interim Superintendent of Schools. Mr. Brennan spoke briefly, mentioning that he would be happy to speak at any future RHS HSA meetings. His main goal for the year is to help get a new Superintendent in place by July 2008.

Board of Education Report

Our HSA Rep., Joe Vallerini, spoke about the search for the new supt. The same search firm is expected to be rehired with approximately the same timetable as last year's search, i.e. March interviews with an April decision.

Math focus groups, chaired by Dr. Beth Fisher-Yoshida, were started last June and will continue through October. These groups, which are comprised of parents and citizens only (no administrators), are attempting to clarify what the perceptions and desires are for our Village math curriculum at the K-8 level. Parents are still requested as volunteers for the focus groups. Only one parent per family may participate and it is hoped that each school will have at least 2 parents involved. Call 201-670-2662 if you are interested in volunteering or have questions about the process.

Orchard field soil testing took place in August and resulted in the fields being closed at the beginning of the school year, due to a perceived "toxic problem". However, following the testimony of 2 experts, Drs. Wayne Yankus and Henry Velez, on September 10, the health and safety risks to playing on the field were deemed insignificant or nonexistent and the field was reopened at the request of the Orchard parents. Last night the BOE did approve additional testing of the field in the future.

Mr. Vallerini thanked Mr. Lorenz for his early letters to parents and staff announcing the upcoming Back-to-School Night on September 27.

Regarding NJ school funding decisions, Mr. Vallerini stated that nothing will really be happening until after the November elections. But one cause for concern is in the area of Special Education funding where Ridgewood stands to lose \$2.6 million. (Such a loss to the district would entail massive program cuts.) The new formula for special ed. Funding would be based on the wealth of the district. Ridgewood parents will need to make their voices heard; please see the RPS website for updates on this funding issue.

Principal's Report

Mr. Lorenz stated that the opening day of school went extremely smoothly, despite the lack of bleachers in the gym—students handled the folding chairs well!

He also thanked the BOE for taking care of the facility needs which he identified at the beginning of last year. Some work is ongoing—the carillon bells will ring in the newly built cupola soon. The east courtyard roof will soon be repaired, with the interior ceiling/wall work resulting from roof leaks to take place next year. The new bleachers have been installed. The east hallway has new lighting and ceiling tiles. The courtyard has been landscaped and picnic tables purchased for it. Mr. Lorenz has met with the Beverly Road neighbors and a landscaping plan for the much-neglected corner there is in the works. The BOE has given the go-ahead on that landscaping. The next phase of facility work—Phase 3—involves an electrical upgrade and emergency generator.

This past spring's "2nd Question" permitted the installation of the new language lab, as well as new technology for the TV Studio, Science Department, Computer Lab and Library. These additions are all in place.

Mr. Lorenz spoke about some administrative reorganization. Basil Pizzuto is now an Asst. Principal. A Data Coordinator has been hired to work with the SASE absence system. The Department Supervisor for Mathematics has announced her resignation; a replacement will be hired.

A student has been missing for 7 days. Any concerns regarding this should be addressed to Dr. Brennan, Supt. The German Exchange program with Oelde, Germany is coming up next week. Ruth Parks, Faculty rep to the HSA, spoke briefly on the exchange—this is the 6th exchange with Oelde since 1996. 16 students are coming next week. They will be staying with RHS host families and visiting Boston, New York, Washington, DC, and Philadelphia. There will be a reception for the RHS community to greet them next Wednesday.

Mr. Vallerini asked how students' concerns may be addressed and was told that they should "go to the source" first, then contact Mrs. Loonam, Mr. Pizzuto, or Mr. Lorenz.

Asst Principal for Guidance Report

Mrs. Loonam made a number of announcements relating to the Guidance Department:

- A 9th grade Club Fair was held on the 1st Friday.
- New Teacher Orientation was held prior to the 1st day of school for the 19 new staff members.
- The current guidance focus is on the 9th graders (getting them adjusted to life at RHS, 9th grade parent mtg. Tomorrow night) and 12th graders (getting their transcripts finalized and dealing with college application issues) In the second semester, the focus will shift to the 10th and 11th grades.
- This Thursday, a college fair will be held at Fairleigh Dickinson, Teaneck.
- October 11th is the Sr. Parent Meeting in which individual guidance counselors will meet with the parents of their advisees
- Mrs. Loonam has just recently updated her manual on writing teacher recommendations—all teachers will receive this manual tomorrow.
- Seniors are receiving help on their college essays in English class

- The October 20th PSAT letter is being sent home to all 10th and 11th graders. The HS receives the results and they are very helpful to the faculty for planning.
- Next in the college speaker series is a rep from Colleges that Change Lives.

Frances Ekblom introduced Callie Trautwein and Melanie Horn from the Student Congress.

Treasurer's Report

Wendy Wong presented the account activity for July and August (no activity) as well as the Budget for 2007-2008. She recommended the same numbers as last year, except for a decrease in the line for the Newsletter costs, since it is now solely published online. She is dividing the excess funds already in this line between Gifts and the College Speaker Series.

The deadline for changes to the RHS Directory is this Friday, September 21. They must be sent to Cheryl Alterman.

Frances made a motion to pass the budget as presented by Wendy. Seconded and approved.

Project Graduation

Lori Nash gave the report. There will be a fundraiser for PG on September 28. PG newsletter will be published soon, with a copy mailed to each Sr. family. PG continues to collect the \$100/family dues. There will be a PG meeting at 7:30 on Wednesday October 17. The committee has managed to collect approx. 80-90% of Sr. family emails.

President's Report

Frances introduced the Executive Board. She asked all parents present to make suggestions for future topics to be addressed at HSA mtgs. She gave the Federated HSA report. There has been concern expressed about the drinking of alcohol at school picnics. Jeanne Johnson is the schools' rep to the town-wide safety committee; she still needs a rep from RHS. Rose Boniello volunteered. October is Walk-to-School month. Please encourage your students to walk to school.

Kathy Hecht asked if the area behind the fields on the right-of-way was patrolled on a regular basis. Mr. Lorenz answered yes, it is via foot patrol.

Fire Prevention Week is coming up in October. Elizabeth Resnick will serve as RHS rep for Fire Prevention Day on October 10.

Jamboree

Debbie Castello announced Jamboree auditions for Oct 2, 10, and 15 in the Campus Center. All parents of RHS students are invited to audition for the upcoming show on Feb. 7, 8, and 9. If your youngest child is a Sr., you will "get special treatment!"

The Sr. class is selling Innisbrook wrapping paper as a fundraiser for PG. Amy Portney is in charge.

Webmaster—Sara Erwin

If you have anything you would like publicized which relates to the activities of the RHS HSA, please email Sara and she will make sure it appears on the RPS website under, RHS, Parent Groups.

Newsletter

Please encourage your friends to go online to read the RHS HSA Newsletter as it will no longer be produced in hard copy form.

Curriculum Committee—Eileen Haynes

The curriculum committee is headed by Regina Botsford of the Ed. Center. If you have any questions, you should direct them to Eileen. Joe Vallerini of the BOE also sits on that committee.

New/Old Business

Caroline Barr brought up the issue of the calendar for next year. She is concerned that the students will be going to school during the last week of June, making it hard for some whose summer jobs or camps start by the beginning of that week. She asked if anything could be done to change this in the future. Joe Vallerini responded that lots of input is received from different parties in coming up with the calendar. He stated that it is a representative group, but that parents should get in touch with the BOE if they have concerns.

Bonnie Chalek spoke with concern about the “new” midterm/final exam schedule to be implemented this year. Mr. Lorenz addressed her questions and concerns stating that there will be a Q & A about this topic before Back-to-School night(at the beginning of the evening). After the new schedule (2 exams per day) is tried out, there will be a comment and feedback period to assess how parents, students, and teachers liked the new schedule. Mr. Lorenz also mentioned that they are examining grading practices, in general, with an eye toward making grading consistent across the various subjects and classes. (e.g. the final would be worth x% for all math classes) Joe Vallerini also spoke on this topic, mentioning that the BOE was very comfortable with trying a new model. Mr. Lorenz said that he would be more comfortable with moving away from a “departmental test”, suggesting that it would be more fair to be tested with your own teacher and classmates.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:20.

Respectfully submitted,

Hilary N. Jones, Secretary

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