

Ridgewood High School Home and School Association

draft

Meeting Minutes

September 16, 2008

Welcome – Elizabeth Resnick, HSA President

Elizabeth welcomed the new Superintendent of Ridgewood Public Schools, Daniel Fishbein. Daniel appreciated having been invited to the RHS HSA meeting and started off with a brief summary of his background. Daniel has lived in Ridgewood for 10 yrs and has 5 children who all attend Ridgewood schools. When he began his career in education, he was a science teacher and coach. He has also served as a principal and administrator and was most recently the Superintendent of the Glen Ridge Public Schools.

Daniel went on to say he that last night he had met with the Ridgewood Board of Education for their Annual Retreat. The intent of the retreat was to update goals. Daniel mentioned that the Ridgewood Public School System will be audited by the State of New Jersey next year. Much is being done in preparation for this audit which includes an extensive evaluation of finances and operations. The Board is also closely assessing the capital improvements that need to be done, including repairs that are inevitable with buildings the ages they are. High on the priority list is the replacement of some very old fire doors. The Board is looking at each school in determining what capital improvements and repairs need to be done.

Board Of Education Update – Joseph Vallerini

The Board is thrilled with the stability that Dr. Fishbein offers in his new role. BOE can now focus on the education of our children. The next goal of the Board is communicating the needs for the upcoming Referendum. The Board is looking for long term solutions, not stop gap measures. The Board really needs parents to spread word about the Referendum and its urgency for our schools. The BOE wants to educate and inform the community about the Referendum. They are aware that the Referendum will need to be crafted appropriately. It is the intent of the BOE to have everyone feel that they have a part in making this community all that it can be!

The preliminary discussions of the Referendum already are looking at a \$35 million dollar request. What is needed is a long term approach. The BOE Meetings are webcasted as well as televised on Channel 77.

We are fortunate to have so many Board members with children at RHS including Laurie Goodman and Michel e Lenhard.

A lot of work still needs to be done on determining what has to be done to bring each of the buildings up to standard as well as determining the best way to finance the needed repairs and improvements.

Principal's Report - Jack Lorenz

9 National Merit semi-finalists from RHS have been announced this year. New Jersey is one of 3 states that have the highest cutoff score for semi-finalists. To have 9 semi-finalists from one school in NJ is outstanding!

Much work was done over the past year on the RHS roof. Jack is pleased to announce that all the rooms now stay dry during heavy rain storms. Also addressed over the past year was improving the lighting and flooring in a number of classrooms. More security cameras have been installed in the RHS building, adding to a number of security cameras that were already in place.

The entire RHS staff now has a laptop computer. Email is the best way for parents to communicate to teachers. Thanks to contributions from the HSA, ceiling hung presentation equipment has been installed in 23 classrooms.

3 students and 2 teachers are coming to RHS from the Shetland Islands to study the Presidential election. If any family is interested in hosting a 13 yr old girl, a 16 yr old boy or 1 teacher please contact Jack Lorenz.

Another group of students and teachers are coming from the Shetland Islands to learn more about the science program/approach here at RHS.

Over 30 RHS students will participate in the Poetry Festival in February. This will be a fabulous opportunity for our children to interact with renowned poets.

A letter addressed to all RHS parents from Jack will be sent out shortly. In the letter Jack will address cheating /ethical behavior/academic dishonesty as it relates to our students. These are issues common at all high schools that Jack believes needs to be openly discussed.

Jack and the RHS Administration want to improve the communication of RHS with incoming freshman parents regarding course selection. Feedback from current freshman parents is being gathered as to how to improve the communication of relevant RHS information to parents while their children are in middle school.

Jack suggested that one possible goal for the HSA Development Committee would be the purchase of Video conferencing equipment that could be utilized by RHS faculty and used as a teaching tool in the classroom.

Finally in response to the HSA's request to explain the RHS Administration and to clarify who the parents need to contact for different concerns, Jack gave an overview of his role and that of the two assistant principals. The RHS Administration has been restructured in recent years so that there is— 1 principal and 2 assistant principals. The two Assistant Principals, Jeff Nyhius and Basil Pizzuto, have very

definitive areas of responsibility that will be detailed in a moment. RHS has a great administrative team that works well together and is receptive to input from students, parents and teachers alike.

Assistant Principal's Report – Jeff Nyhius

Jeff's official title is "Assistant Principal of Guidance, Curriculum and Instruction". Prior to taking on this role he was a math teacher at RHS for 8 yrs and then a Guidance counselor for 3 years. As Vice Principal Jeff fulfills four primary roles including: academic counseling and scheduling, monitoring grades, personal counseling/peer relations (i.e. bullying, friendships), and career counseling & college application guidance. The Peer counseling program at RHS has been a tremendous advantage in helping relate and stay in touch with the freshman class.

Naviance has been a tremendous tool that has benefited students in the college selection process. A primary role of the counselors is guiding seniors through the college application process. Juniors come into play in spring as seniors are winding down regarding their needs. The junior parent meeting to kick off the college process is sponsored by the RHS Guidance Department in the spring.

Freshman, juniors and seniors are more catered to due to need, but they do also monitor the sophomores, particularly regarding grades and scheduling,

There are formal and informal modes of communication the RHS teachers and administrators use to reach out to parents. The formal modes include warning letters to parents, and report cards. Informal means of communication are emails, phone calls and parent meetings.

When parents have a question or concern they should deal with the RHS staff closest to the situation as opposed to going first to the administrators. They encourage parents to communicate with the teachers as first the means of communication, if that is exhausted, then move up the line of power. They are all here to help our kids, first and foremost. Thus it is important to email the teacher first before contacting the administration.

The more we encourage our children to address their teachers regarding their needs, questions, and concerns, the better off they are as learners....important lesson in taking responsibility for themselves. If this is not sufficient then a parent can reach out to teacher. It is so important to have our children take ownership of their situation. They need to learn to develop a relationship with their teachers and administrators. Children need to learn to be advocates for themselves.

Assistant Principal's Report – Basil Pizzuto

Basil's formal title is "Assistant Principal of Administration and Student Services." Basil oversees the Grade Administrators (GA) which are being relabeled "Grade Advisors". He is also now the GA for the 9th grade class. The GA's will stay with the class all four years. Basil was the GA for the outgoing senior class that graduated in June. Basil's role/team oversee everything else at RHS but academics. He is in charge of all the day to day living at RHS i.e. lockers, peer relationships...Those at RHS are sensitive to when they need reach out to professional counselors if needed. He oversees the social side of high school as well – how can the students have fun safely and appropriately. It is his role to make their day

to day life at RHS enjoyable. Basil works with the Student Council to host events including semi-formal dances held at the school. They do have all-school events, mixed grade events, so different ages can interact. They want to provide a safe environment for the kids to socialize and have fun.

The goal of the Vice Principals is clarifying who parents/students should go to for various problems, issues and questions. They are currently preparing a grid to delineate /communicate who does what and who can deal with what.

The last item Basil would like to mention is the change in staff at the RHS Attendance Office. With the new personnel 3 languages are spoken. This has been a tremendous asset in overcoming the language barrier numerous RHS parents faced.

HSA President's Update - Elizabeth Resncik

A motion was made for the June 16 HSA Meeting Minutes to be passed. The Minutes were voted on and approved.

A Thank You note from Peg Loonam was read. Peg greatly appreciated the plaque and reception that was given in her honor at the June meeting. We hope she is enjoying her new role as Principal at Orchard School.

A generous thank you to was given to the Hospitality Co-chairs – Nancy Stewart and Amy Scher who coordinated the reception at the June meeting for Peg Loonam and the Welcome Back Reception for teachers and staff that was hosted in September.

Thank you was extended to Beth Jorgensen for initiating and chairing the new Development Committee at RHS. The Development Committee had a tremendously successful first year. The new laptop computers that were purchased for RHS are in the Media Center/Library and have been a tremendous asset for the students.

Congratulations to the RHS Administration....RHS was ranked #7 in New Jersey magazine. This high ranking is a tribute to our administrators, staff, parents, and students who have all worked hard together.

Update from Federated HSA - The Harlem Wizards are coming to play at RHS on January 30, 2009. This year the proceeds from the game will be given back to our schools to help cover programs that are being cut due to state budget restrictions.

All bank accounts for all the Home and School Associations at all the Ridgewood Public Schools have been consolidated at Commerce Bank on Franklin Avenue. The HSAs will each be dealing with the same bank representative. This streamlines banking and accounting for all the HSAs.

Finally, the RHS HSA Board would like to propose a new standing committee "RHS CARES" to offer support to families in need in the high school community. Anyone interested in helping to co-chair this committee should contact Elizabeth. RHS Cares will be a long standing committee from this point on.

Introduction of HSA Executive Board.

Vice- President – Rola Baddoura

Rola's primary role as V.P. is to assist Elizabeth the HSA President. The other important role of the V.P. is parliamentarian, primarily reviewing and updating the By-Laws as necessary. The V.P. also oversees the fundraisers to make sure there are no conflicts, particularly the numerous endeavors taken on by each grade level. This year Rola is also overseeing the Chamber of Commerce calendar which will include art from the RHS Art Department. The proceeds from the calendars sold by RHS will go to the Art Department. Rola will have Chamber of Commerce Calendars available for purchase at the next meeting.

Treasurer -Wendy Wong

Wendy presented the Proposed Budget for 2008/2009. The primary difference between the upcoming year's budget and last year's budget is there is not a need for \$1,000 for the HSA Newsletter now that the HSA is utilizing Enews. This money will instead be directed to the Development Committee.

To date only 700 families have paid their HSA dues. Please if you have not submitted your dues for the new school year, please do so ASAP.

For new families, it is important to know that in order to get a RHS Directory, their HSA dues must be paid.

IMPORTANT QUESTION posed – If payment of HSA dues is down for all Ridgewood schools, and since we all updated our directory information on Community Pass, why cannot we pay our dues on Community Pass as well?

Communications - Sara Erwin

Sara gave an explanation of the various RHS/HSA/BOE List Serves, how to sign up for each and what they provide you with. This information is also on the back of the HSA Booster Calendar handout.

Sara oversees the RHS HSA Enews. She will post all information about fundraisers, please contact her if you have any information you want posted in the monthly Enews. Sara will send out reminder each month to all coordinators that Enews is being compiled. Please submit any information you want communicated to the RHS parents to Sara.

HSA Goals set forth from brainstorming activity

- 1) Communication – utilizing Enews to disseminate information, getting more RHS families signed up for Enews, foster feedback from parents and staff
- 2) Development – for educational enhancements to benefit all RHS students, need parental support in times of severe budget cuts by the State of New Jersey
- 3) HSA Meetings – the Agenda will be posted on the website prior to the meeting date, the Meeting Minutes will be posted on the website

Teacher Representatives – Ruth Parks and Donna Antonellis

Thank you very much to the HSA and the Hospitality Committee for the fabulous brunch that welcomed them back their first day in Sept.

Teachers are all working to utilize Blackboard more. Glad to announce that all teachers now all have a laptop to work from.

Donna stated that RHS has greatly increased the number of computers available for the students. There are now 2 computer labs that teachers & their classes can use in addition to the 30 plus computers provided by the HSA in the library/media center. Thanks to Jack and the HSA the technology has greatly improved at RHS.

If students are having difficulty logging on, have them come to library for assistance.

Student Representatives – Nick Aynilian and Jacob Levitsky

Elizabeth thanked both students for taking the time out from their studies to be at the meeting.

Senior Class Representatives/Project Graduation – Lisa Diss

The Project Graduation Kickoff Party was held last weekend. Over 125 senior parents attended this event. Senior Yearbook orders are due on Sept 19. The last day for pictures for senior portraits is in October.

Fundraisers for Project Graduation include Innisbrook Wrapping Paper Sale, Goffle Brook Farm Sale Days, and a Bake Sale at the RHS football game versus Don Bosco. Brighton gifts, is another fundraiser being sponsored by the senior class, order forms can be downloaded from the Project Graduation website. Finally a fundraiser will be held at Mango Jam in November.

Pasta Dinner and Slide Show for seniors only is on Nov 12.

Fashion Show is April 5th, 2009

All information is on website.

Freshman Class Representatives – Audrey Fink, Carol Smith, and Arlene Sarapoo

They have hit the ground running. They have included an order form for a RHS 2012 blanket in a mailing to freshman parents. The 2012 Blanket order form is also on the website. The blanket sale has already been a tremendous success.

Development - Katie Van Saun & Theresa Callaghan

Last year more than 150 families participated and raised \$17,000 via a letter campaign. The Development Committee intends to do another major letter campaign again this year, they are aiming for Oct. The intent is to have our students benefit from the contributions this year! Video conferencing

equipment and Smart Boards are some of the goals being assessed. Currently RHS only has 1 Smart Board which cost \$4000 each. The Smart Boards interact with a computer and overhead equipment to create an interactive, state of the art learning environment. Ideally they would like to have half the classrooms at RHS be set up with a Smart Board. If anyone is interested in helping the Development Committee in brainstorming and overseeing the fundraising activities please contact Katie VanSaun or Theresa Callaghan.

Safety - Rose Boniello

It is important for all drivers, parents and student drivers as well, to know that all cars must stop for people in crosswalks. Drivers need to be conscientious when driving kids to and from school. We also need to remind our kids that they need to look both ways before crossing the street, particularly along Beverly Road.

Elizabeth thanked everyone for attending the first meeting of the year.

Meeting adjourned at 9:15. Next HSA meeting is Tuesday, October 14, 2008.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynn Granski

In attendance:

Elizabeth Resnick, Lynn Granski, Kate Douglass, Jamie Fredericks, Rola Baddoura, Audrey Fink, Beth Freed, Tracy Sprowls Jenks, Rose Boniello, Linda Willk, Margie McKeon, Sue Staples, Vicky Herbert, Eileen Haynes, Linda Zwyhan, Katie Van Saun, Frances Hason Ekblom, Yvonne Francis, Terri McAteer, Cathy Strahle, Maryam Alsop, Carol Rapaport, Carol Smith, Arlene Sarappo, Joseph Vallerini, Michele Lenhard, Suzanne Donovan, Elizabeth Gordon, Maureen Chiaramotto, Fay Mehran, Elizabeth Shadbolt, Laurie Goodman, Christine Shea, Cristy Sippel, Beth Jorgensen, Donna Antonellis, Jack Lorenz, Basil Pizzuto, Jeff Nyhius, Ruth Parks, Nancy Stewart, Cheryl Sabbath, Jean Cleary, Lisa Diss, Amy Davidson, Lisa Gobble, Cathy Caputo, Bonnie Chalek, Joanne Delaney, Maura Fleming, Nick Aynilian, Jacob Levitsky