

PTA Advisory Meeting: December 4, 2013

Minutes

Attendance: *S. Pepper, A. Wasserman, D. Brennan, R. McCauley, J. Getsinger, C. Tognetti, L. McCormick, K. Mullooly, R. Camean, G. Margolis, D. Stark, G. Grau*

I. Welcome / Introduction

- a. Mr. Pepper introduced Charlie Grau, the interim Business Administrator / Board Secretary filling the position while Vanessa Wolsky is on maternity leave. Mr. Grau has served in this capacity previously for Hanover Township, and he has an impressive record of many years of service in education.

II. School Calendar

- a. Mr. Pepper shared a draft of the proposed school calendar for 2014-15. He has consulted with local school districts as well as the regional high school district to try to coordinate the scheduled school closings with them.
- b. The Board of Education will likely approve the 2014-15 calendar at its January meeting.

III. School Budget

a. Challenges

- i. The state mandated 2% cap on the tax levy continues to be a challenge because some costs (utilities, supplies, transportation, textbooks, etc.) have increased by more than 2%.
- ii. This year the Hanover Township Education Association (HTEA) contract expires, and terms must be negotiated for a new contract. The HTEA represents all district employees with the exception of district administrators. The Board of Education and the HTEA have worked out excellent and reasonable contracts in the past, and it is likely they will do so again this year, but there is a certain amount of unpredictability when it is a contract renegotiation year.

b. Enrollment / Construction

- i. The Township has been undergoing a great deal of residential development. This affects the student population which, in turn, affects the number of teachers needed as well as additional expense items (transportation, supplies, textbooks, possible special needs placements, etc.). The Township Committee and the Board of Education communicate so that the Board of Education can try to plan accordingly to meet the residents' needs, but some unpredictability remains here as well.
- ii. In consultation with a firm that studies demographics and socioeconomic issues, the Board of Education has projected numbers of potential students to enter the public schools from at least four different new developments.
- iii. In addition to the construction already started, several large tracts of land exist in the township which could become residential developments in the near future.

- c. Staffing – the Board of Education is committed to keeping its teacher-student ratios at current levels and staffing needs will be assessed on an on-going basis as the student populations of each neighborhood elementary school are solidified as the new school year approaches.

IV. Board of Education Updates

- a. Dan Breen was elected to a three-year term of the Board of Education in the November elections. His term will officially begin as of January 2014 although he has already begun get acclimated and acquainted with Board procedures and other Board members.
- b. The outgoing Board member is Michael Alwell who served two three-year terms.
- c. Additionally, Tom “Ace” Gallagher will be resigning from the Board of Education because he was elected to the Township Committee. There is one year remaining in the seat he will vacate. The Board Secretary will advertise the position and accept applications; then, the Board of Education will conduct interviews and appoint a candidate to fill the position through December 2014. If no one applies for the position, the County Superintendent will appoint a candidate to fill the position.

V. Security

- a. Voting in the Schools – Mr. Pepper has been in communication with George Coppola of the Township Committee regarding the issue of voting in the schools. As of today, no new information is available; the Town Council is still waiting to hear from the County Board of Elections about its proposed alternative polling locations. A police officer has been stationed at each school during the recent elections, and this practice will continue as long as elections are still held in the school buildings. It is the hope of the Board of Education that the schools will no longer be used as polling places. The next scheduled election is in June 2014.
- b. Security Cameras – The Board of Education is currently accepting bids for the installation of motion-activated security cameras at each of the three elementary schools. Cameras would be placed at the entrances, sides, and rears of the buildings. A monitoring system would be present in the main offices, and it would also be remotely accessible from the Board Offices and possibly from portable devices as well. The Board projects that this additional security measure will be in place by the end of this school year. For MJS, the Board is budgeting security camera installation for the 2014-15 school year with several external and at least one internal motion-activated camera.

VI. Report from Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Development

- a. Mathematics Resources for Parents – Mr. Wasserman explained that the Pearson Envision math curriculum currently used in grades K – 8 has extensive online resources available for teachers and parents. At the November Board of Education meeting, two teachers presented information about how they have implemented the curriculum and how to access the online content. Teachers will continue to enhance their use of these resources through professional development opportunities. Mr. Wasserman plans to send a letter home to parents after the winter holiday break with additional information about how to access the valuable online information.
- b. A school climate survey will once again be sent out to families this year after the winter holidays. Students will take the survey during the school day. Parents will be able to take the survey for each child in their family; this is an improvement from last year based on direct feedback from the community.

- c. A question was asked about when parents might be able to access children's grades online. The district has been implementing Power School and plans to pilot the parent portal next year in a small segment of the middle school population. Teachers are continuing to learn the uses of Power School. Mr. Wasko explained that MJS used Power School for printing its first marking period report cards last month, and some troubleshooting was necessary. Power School might also be used in the future as the emergency notification system instead of Honeywell; it is possible to use Power School for a variety of communication needs.

VII. "Excellence in Our Schools" Newsletter – Mr. Pepper highlighted the recent newsletter that went home to parents last month. It was an expanded edition because of the coverage of the MJS auditorium's renovation project, the Tricky Tray fundraiser, and the Adopt-a-Seat donors. By mid-January, the plaques honoring Adopt-a-Seat donors should be on the walls outside the auditorium.

VIII. Recreation Updates

- a. Denise Brennan announced that the Hanover Township Recreation Department will be implementing an online registration program called "Capture Point" in January.
- b. The Masquerade at Malapardis in October was very successful; Ms. Brennan thanked the PTAs for their support and participation.
- c. Many winter programs are scheduled for all age groups, and the Recreation Department is even looking into setting up lunchtime programs for adults. There is a four-day holiday break program offered for K – 8th graders during the winter school holiday.

IX. Looking Ahead

- a. The next Board of Education meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, December 17th at 7:30pm in the MJS Media Center. Approximately 15 students involved in the Honors Band program will be performing at the start of the meeting.
- b. Holiday / winter concerts are coming up at all schools this month: Mountview this week, Salem next week, and Bee Meadow and MJS the final week of December.
- c. The "Faculty and Friends" concert will be held on Tuesday, January 21st at 7:30pm in the MJS auditorium. This concert benefits the Kathryn Moser Endowment Fund. This year, the choral group Harmonium is scheduled to perform; Kathryn Moser's husband George Moser is a member of this group. Ms. Bellino is attempting to resolve a scheduling conflict so that The Whiptones can also perform that evening. A choral group of Hanover Township employees and residents will also perform. A flyer will go home soon with information about tickets and participation.

X. Other

- a. After school clubs at elementary schools – The three elementary school principals explained that teachers have begun to make proposals about types of clubs at each of the schools. Some ideas are in the areas of art, reading, technology, physical education / sports, and science. There is a concern about making this program equitable for all ages of students because the current ideas for clubs primarily target the 4th and 5th graders. Clubs will most likely begin sometime after the winter holiday.

- b. Mr. Wasko distributed copies of the MJS Newsletter which is also available online via the school district website. It has a variety of articles describing recent happenings at MJS, such as the 6th grade Outdoor Education Trip and Cross Country Team's participation in the state championship meet for the first time.
- c. Fifth grade students from Salem Drive School will once again be performing for the residents of Arden Courts and Care One. On December 20th, the students will perform their choral music concert under the instruction of Mr. Pomel. Fifth grade students from Mountview Road School will perform their holiday choral songs at the Shop Rite in Cedar Knolls on December 14th. It is terrific to have the students serve their community in this way!
- d. Next PTA Advisory meeting is scheduled for March 5, 2014, 10:00am in Computer Lab II at MJS.

Respectfully submitted,

Rose McCauley

Salem Drive School PTA President