

## **Orchard Home and School Association September 2022 Meeting Minutes**

Call to Order : 9:11AM

Attendees (Principal and Board Members): Mary Ferreri; Co-President: Patty Leung; Treasurer: Bonita Shimpfky; Assistant Treasurer: Shweta Dixit; Corresponding Secretary: Sarah McCourt; Recording Secretary: Jen Zolcinski

Absent: Co-President: Tia Ly; Vice President: Becky Chin

Other Attendees: Mrs. Rubin; Vanessa Carr; Britt Tunick; Vicki Roubal; Liz Suri; Melanie Amores; Alexandra Hayes; Jennifer DeSisto; Flory Ortiz; Jenna Hammond; Julie Martinez; Suzette Dela Rama; Kristen Lee; Todd Rothman; Sivani Shanmugavatnam; Erin Mickelwaite; Allison Kansen; Stacy Heistein; Heather Madigan; Jimmy Judge; Sahar Augustine; Mishi Popovich

### **Co-President's Welcome (Patty Leung):**

Patty introduced the HSA Board attendees.

### **Treasurer's Report:**

There is \$35k budgeted for this year. Last year we had \$43k of net profits, mostly due to the auction event and Friends of Orchard campaign. The auction raised \$25k and the campaign raised \$20k.

The current bank balance is \$104k, with the following outstanding checks cut to the Board of Ed: \$14k for the field trip and \$8k for the flex seating.

The HSA's Tax Exempt form can be found online. Please use it when purchasing any HSA related events/services/goods.

### **Vice President's Report:**

(Given by Patty in Becky Chin's absence) Becky is focused on filling open committee chairs, including talent show and teacher appreciation

breakfast. The breakfast also needs general helpers to organizing and for other help. Parents will see emails going out for open volunteer positions. Sometimes it will be just an email, sometimes it will include a link to sign up genius. For any questions related to volunteer opportunities, reach out to Becky.

### **Corresponding Secretary's Report:**

Sarah McCourt: All class parent communications have gone out or will go out this week. For HSA News, we are waiting for the directory to go live, so it will be sent either tomorrow or next week.

### **Co-president's Report:**

(Given by Patty in Tia Ly's absence) Tia is also the committee chair for Group Spot. She is waiting for the overall group involved in Group Spot to filter and add information before it can go live.

When making payments to the HSA in PayPal, there are three options by which to select the HSA for payment: Email, handle or actual name, as listed below.

Email: orchardhsatreasurer@gmail.com

Handle: @orchardschoolHSA

Name: Orchard Home and School Association

Patty requested that parents please pay HSA dues, as it will give access to many things on Group Spot, including sports announcements, parent contact info, teacher contact info, and much more.

Bonita requested that parents please make separate payments for separate for transactions/items/events, as it makes it easier for the treasurers to track what's paid for by the parents. Additionally, Shweta requested of the parents to please use the message/description box available when making PayPal payments and to include your child's name and the event/item for which you are making payment. (Patty

noted that most emails and social media posts will include a note on what should specifically be included in the message/description box.)

Tia working around clock on setting up and maximizing Group Spot, including looking for ad revenue to fundraise by giving the local community/businesses access to advertise on this platform.

### **Committee Reports:**

#### **Author visit:**

Jenna Hammond - There is a Fall author visit on 10/28/22. It is at no cost to the school as Donna Antonellis is funding authors. There will be a Grades K-2 presentation and a Grades 3-5 presentation. Information went out in e-news. The committee is striving to be paperless (thanks made to Jimmy Judge for helping the committees move to paperless processes). Parents can order books for their children by using the electronic order form and then making payment in PayPal (be sure to add who you are ordering for in the message/description box). If you have multiple children in school, to make it easier for the parent and distribution, parents can make one order with all books going to one child and then separate the books at home. Orders are due 9/20/22.

#### **Fun Day**

Vanessa Carr - Rebecca Rothman, Jenna Hammond, and Vanessa met, assigned tasks, and sent out a signup genius to request volunteers. They really need people to volunteer. Parents can email Vanessa with questions. They will market wristbands for admission and raffles in advance of the event to avoid the long lines experienced last year when paying upon arrival.

Jenna explained Fun Day for new parents. It used to be an all day long event on a weekend day, and now it is held on a Friday after school. Most kids will want to go, and siblings are welcome. Students who are in aftercare are also being organized to be able to join. It is a Halloween theme.

## **Apparel Sales**

Vanessa Carr indicated that she and Sarah Klein met in July, which was too late to have sales start at the beginning of the school year, so the online store will launch in 1-2 weeks. There will be various apparel available, including long sleeve active shirts, which we've never had before, a hat, Ridgewood hats with new design, pajama pants, black sweatpants. Many items will be available in adult sizes as well. There will not be samples, as it is not permitted due to Covid. There will be no apparel available for sale at the picnic, as there are no left over items from the prior year's sale.

Bumper magnets have been ordered as another fundraiser for the school. They will be available for purchase at the picnic, please be prepared to pay in cash. They will not be available to order online.

## **Back to school picnic**

Heather Madigan - This will be held from 5-7pm after school on 9/29/22. There is no admission charge for the event. The playground and blacktop are available for this event and there will dancing. There will be a DJ, ice cream truck (not covered, bring cash to purchase), a bake sale (it is easier to pay in cash for this as well). It was noted that the bake sale is a fundraiser for the school, while the ice cream truck is not (profits go to the truck, not the school).

Parents can pre-order pizzas and activity bags online. Tuesday, 9/27/22, is last day to order. These items have an up-charge to cover the event, including the DJ, and any extra funds will go to the school. So far the committee has 53 responses; 56 pizzas and 65 activity bags were ordered.

## **Birthday Books**

Heather Madigan - Parents can place an order and Mrs. LaBarr will order a collection of books from which your child can choose to add their name in the name plate inside the book. They will be permitted to be bring the book home to show their parents and then return it to the

library for its collection. In prior year it was \$15 per book or \$25 for two, however, they ran out of money last year as it had become more expensive to purchase books. Therefore, it will be \$20 per book this year and they are encouraging one book per child. If you want to order more than one book, you can contact Heather. Information on ordering will come out in next week in e-news.

Patty noted her observation of the joy it brings to the children when they happen to see their sibling's name in a book at the library.

### **Co-President's Report (Patty Leung):**

Patty thanked Tia and Adrian for setting up the school supply boxes the parents ordered for their children. For those new to the school, an email regarding the option to order the school supplies goes out in May or June. Ordering saves you tons of time, and the supplies are hand delivered to your child's classroom.

Patty also thanked Shweta for providing coffee to parents on first day of school. Many new parents participated in the coffee gathering, and leftovers were given to the teachers.

Patty noted that Back to School Night was smooth sailing - parking was easy, the presentations were very good, the teachers were prepared and organized. The feedback from parents was very positive. Parents were able to see samples of their child's writing, pictures, etc., on the walls of the classroom after only 2 days of school. It was great to have everyone back in the building this year, meeting in multi-purpose room and feeling the school spirit.

Patty noted that the Federated HSA Meetings include the superintendent and a Board of Ed board member. All HSA presidents in the district attend these meetings once a month, and they serve as a way to communicate ideas/thoughts among all of the schools and to have a direct connection to the superintendent. This month's meeting served as an introduction meeting. The current year's Wizards Game was discussed. The games will be held on 1/25/23 and 1/26/23. Patty noted

that Mrs. Ferreri and Mrs. Rubin participate in the game. Tickets will be available online. Save the date and further info will be send via emails. It is held at high school gym.

### **Teachers' Report:**

Mrs. Rubin noted that it has been a really smooth start from where she sits. The beginning of the school year is usually choppy due to the September holidays, however, this year it has not been the case due to the way the holidays fell and so the children have been in school more consistently, and that has helped. Teachers have been going over classroom routine and community building over the past couple of weeks and are now diving into the curriculum and performing assessments, including the 4th and 5th grade assessments.

The first week of October will be a week of respect, which is a NJ celebrated event. It will be a spirit week, including pajama day, bright color day, favorite team day, etc, and one day that week is picture day. This will be in e-news.

Mrs. Rubin also started new student lunches, with new kids grades 2-5 invited to bring a friend and have lunch with Mrs. Rubin. She is also organizing lunch bunches for grades 1-5. They will have lunch with Mrs. Rubin, socialize, play a game, then go to recess. These are not for the purpose of addressing any issues. If there were any pressing issues, the parent would already know about it.

Mrs. LaBarr reports it is nice to be back and the kids were excited to see her. She informed them it that her return is unusual situation, and that it could be for a short time or whole year. The kids were happy to see miss purple too. Mrs. LaBarr would love to have library volunteers. Eimear is the library volunteer coordinator. Eimear is also coordinating the book fair, and she will need volunteers for this as well.

### **5th Grade Coordination**

Britt Tunick - There will be an email sent today for 5th grade parents to inform them with regard to the status of the 5th grade activities. The

first of the 5th grade fundraisers will also start soon. They are selling greeting cards that are of Papyrus-style quality and individually wrapped. They are \$30 per box, which includes 30 cards, so \$1 per card. The HSA is trying to create fundraisers that sell items that parents/students can actually use or are activities they would want to do. The fundraiser info will go out in e-news.

Movie night will be a movie under the stars with an old school movie - Casper the ghost starring Christina Ricci. Gift bags will be available and they are currently assessing the price. This will also be included e-news next Tuesday.

The Fun Day Spook house is run by 5th graders and will also be included in today's email to 5th grade parents.

### **Principal's Report:**

Back to school feels back to normal this year. All the things the administration is working on are typical, normal ones.

Auction project updates - there are 3 items:

Outdoor classroom

Flex seating

Kindergarten swing set

The outdoor items require working intricately with the Facilities Dept. Once checks are cut, they are sent to the Board of Ed, we get funds and then order. Summer is generally slower plus there were some transitions, etc., at the Board of Ed, therefore progress on facility projects went slow. Weather could also impact the progress of the outdoor items. Also, soil remediation makes us have to be more careful about any outdoor projects. There is still some leftover landscaping to do post soil remediation. They are hoping to get the ball rolling on this and will keep us posted on these items.

### **Assessment updates:**

As a public school, we hadn't given assessments since 2018. It's always in spring for Grades 3-5 covering English, Language Arts, and Math, as well as science for 5th grade. The assessments occurred for first time in three years last spring and students did unbelievably well. First a report has to be given to the district, then Mrs. Ferreri can provide the salient points on it to the parents. Overall the kids did very well, and we are still seeing gains even through what happened in the past three years.

Individual student reports will be sent in the mail on Friday. If it is determined that a child needs additional help, our team will reach out to the parents.

The state asked them to give the Start Strong assessment again for grades 4-5. While it was disappointing to have to put the kids through them again, the kids got through it.

At the beginning of the year, we do lots of assessments with students (some don't even realize they are being assessed), all to inform any plans for the student for the year and for the Fall parent conference. Note that only grades K-2 have a Spring conference. If you have individual concerns, please reach out at any time.

The curriculum was updated this summer, as noted in the regular Board of Ed meetings. English and Language Arts have differences related to grammar components and they re-tweaked phonics. There were revisions to Science. And there are some new Health standards. For Grades 1,2, and 5, for which typical components included family like items, there are 4-5 new additional vocabulary pieces and they have added lessons that are different. Prior to Health being taught in those grades, you will receive a letter at home that is very detailed stating the lesson, the book, etc. Nurse Horton will send these letters and will teach the Health curriculum. If you have questions, you may ask her. There was a detailed Board of Ed meeting on this topic on 8/29/22.

It was asked if start strong would go on student's permanent records. Mrs. Ferreri replied that it is included in student file but doesn't go on high school or college transcript.



Jenna commented on the facilities outside the school, noting that there is some uneven pavement, as well as a hole in black top. Mrs. Ferreri replied that they plan to do something about that and also want to widen the sidewalk.

Alex Hayes suggested that the HSA get a dads group to volunteer to clean up the outside, etc.; this suggestion was noted by Erin and Todd of the Landscape Committee. She also suggested asking the kids to perform clean-ups.

Erin asked if there is a way to see what was actually changed in the grammar curriculum. Mrs. Ferreri will see if its already avail publicly.

Todd provided an update on the Late Start initiative. Dr. Fitz, the interim superintendent, could be here for up to two years. The Board of Ed is close to selecting a search firm to find a replacement. They received notice from Tom Gorman in March 2022. It is thought that we will hear from the Board in the next 2-3 weeks that they have selected a search firm. If 2-3 months are spent on the search, hopefully they would hire someone in the winter or spring and have someone in line for 2023-2024 school year. We are a really big school district, so we present more challenges than the average school district.

We are 12 years into the discussion of the Late Start initiative. California has changed their law and now start later. There is a lot of science on this. The Board sent out a survey to parents this spring. They were surprised to find that they results were really mixed. The district could technically decide to just make the change, but they want to make sure they have buy-in. Therefore, this initiative has been tabled until next superintendent has been selected. There is also a proposed bill in NJ that would mandate all schools have later start by the 2024-2025 school year. If this bill goes through, then the district will be forced to make this change. So this initiative probably won't be discussed again until this time next year.

A note from Sarah McCourt - if you're a committee chair and want to include something in HSA News, send it by Mondays for inclusion on Fridays.

Patty ended the meeting with a heartfelt thank you for the 4th of July float, including Liz and Johnny Segarra, for providing the use of their home for 3 weeks, with doors open. She noted the parent involvement was amazing, and thanked Vanessa for her coordination and Liz for her artistic contributions, and Abby as well for her artistic contribution. This year we received two awards. Parents even came back to Orchard to help. If anyone available for next year to chair this committee, recruitment and meetings start in April, and building starts in June.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:07am.