



**PTA Meeting Minutes
May 9, 2019**

The executive board, about 25 parents, and 8 teachers and staff were in attendance

President's report -- Ashley Salazar

Our second annual Read-a-thon will start May 13 and run for two weeks. Ashley has arranged for the AEA staff to offer lunches and parties as incentives to raffle off to top readers and classes. The goal is to raise money to use toward equipment in the new multimedia room.

Thank you to Ying Lai for organizing the parents' night out archery event. Everyone involved said it was a great time.

Teacher appreciation week wrap-up -- Rebekah Pokart-Cabonargi

Katy Chiu organized a fantastic teacher appreciation week for the AEA staff. Monday she had chocolate-dipped fruit delivered from Edible Arrangements. Tuesday was a bathroom spruce-up, with personal care items stocked in the teacher restrooms. Wednesday brought love notes from the students. Thursday she had a bagel, muffin and fruit breakfast delivered. On Friday, teachers will shop from a gift cart of school supplies, plus snacks and beverages. Their treat bags will include \$20 Target gift cards as well. Overall, \$965 was collected from parents for the week, and the PTA added \$47.45 from its account. The event was pulled together at the last minute, and almost everyone participated -- which was a great result.

Motion to approve April's minutes -- Stacey Shick Samuels

Approved without objection

Treasurer's report for April -- Paul Goldfarb

We made over \$1,000 from the school photos through Stomping Ground Photo. You'll also see the payment to Miss Chocolate for the products we sold on the April expense report.

Beginning balance: \$18,310.59

Income: \$1,225.89

Expenses: \$2,080.45

Ending balance: \$17,456.03

Elections for 2019-20 PTA Executive Board and SLT positions -- Marina Zakry, Melissa Lugo, Jenny Verdon, nominating committee

Ilyse Sisolak added her name into nomination for an SLT position.

Ooma Deonarine was not present at the meeting, and was removed from the ballot in the treasurer race.

Nominated for the PTA board were: Simone Dornbach & Elaine Lee-Wong, as

co-presidents; Rebekah Pokart-Cabonargi, as vice president; Edward Suh, as treasurer; and Sheryl Hirshon, as recording secretary, all unopposed. A motion was made to elect them accept them as a group, and approved without objection.

For SLT, nominees Walter Birkhold, Henny Maddox, Michele Molfetta, Vincent Roulot, Stacey Shick Samuels, Maria Scoloveno and Ilyse Sisolak gave speeches. A vote was conducted by paper ballot. Elected were: Michele Molfetta, Vincent Roulet, Stacey Shick Samuels and Maria Scoloveno.

Student planners for the 2019-20 school year -- Rebekah Pokart-Cabonargi

For the past two years, the PTA has provided calendar planners for the upper grades, to record their homework. Second- and third-grade parents have either liked or been neutral on the idea of these school planners. Last year's planners were highly customized, and quite expensive, compared with an off-the-shelf planner. Rebekah did research, and through a recommendation from 1st Day School Supplies, it would cost \$381.25 for the PTA to provide planners to 125 students in the 2nd-, 3rd- and 4th grade. (\$2.60 a planner plus a shipping fee.) To customize, the price jumps to over \$4, and most parents didn't feel like the customization was worth the cost. A motion was made to purchase basic planners for the three upper grades, and approved with no objection.

SLT meeting update -- Ilyse Sisolak

Only about 30 families filled out the communication survey that the administration distributed online. Mrs. Leto and Mrs. Gallo said they are always afraid of giving out information that later becomes outdated, so that's why they sometimes hesitate to share things. They are throwing around a lot of ideas for the fourth and fifth grades. They are considering one streamlined communications platform for all school information in the fall, instead of Remind/school website/Shutterfly etc. But it will have to be free or low-cost.

For the media center library in the new building, the administration asked for 7,400 books. They were originally granted 3,300, but the school appealed because it does not currently have a library. Now the school will receive 8,800 volumes from Scholastic, split 60-40 between fiction and nonfiction.

Mrs. Vasilakis ordered 18 Ozobots to help with coding in the STEAM curriculum, and students have been using them, in addition to the robots the PTA purchased last summer.

Grading: There's been a lot of concern about 4th grade and the marks students receive, because some middle school admissions are determined by a computer looking at students' grades, instead of a holistic view. So there will be changes next year to be sure that AEA kids are getting what they deserve, so they will be placed in the right schools. Other schools in the Forest Hills area were polled, to be sure AEA is in line with common practice. Students will be graded on a 1 to 4 scale, with no 3+, as was used this year. It will level the playing field. The grading system will be recalibrated to rely more strictly on data, like tests, homework, classwork. The staff stressed that they want to give every student in this school the advantages they deserve moving forward. Students who started at AEA have gotten into top-tier high schools, so we know they are receiving a quality education. But there will be strictness around homework being done on time, or else the top possible grade will drop. Each semester grade will reflect just that semester; the final report

card will be cumulative. It is the last cumulative grade that stays on a student's record moving forward. There are specific G&T and citywide schools that pull middle school students simply from a formula that includes the 4th grade state test scores, grades and attendance -- they just put the numbers in a computer. This plan will help make sure our students get the number output they deserve.

Parent coordinator's report -- Jainnie Hackman

June 3 will be an On Stage With Mrs. Leto about 4th grade planning. It is specifically for 3rd grade parents, but anyone who wants to attend is welcome. Please sign up, so a packet can be prepared for you. Logistics are still in the works for drop-off and pick-up for next school year.

Jainnie has added a Google Community Board to the P.S. 303 website, which is another form of communication. Jainnie is updating it and sending out a link on Remind every week. The calendar on that board is live and can be integrated with your personal Google Calendar. She is working on an end-of-year family day with stations for family fun (like face-painting or activities) because the school can't have a picnic like in years past. She is working on restarting book club for parents and students together. Under consideration for the fall is an afternoon girls group to build self-esteem, talk about hygiene etc. -- it's through a program that will train female parents to lead the group. (For now there's no equivalent boys group.) Plans are in the works for a parent talent show next spring. If it seems like there's a disconnect this year, between the administration and the parents, because of the construction -- things will improve.

Spring break field trips were a great success. Jainnie is also working on summer trips, such as to Splish Splash Water Park or Philadelphia. Also, the new building will have a parents room where you can meet with Jainnie!

Q&A

Michele Molfetta offers a thank you to Ashley Salazar for her service as president. Bravo!