

MINUTES

Howe Elementary PTA 2021-2022

Date Jan 12, 2021 | *Meeting called to order at* 7:08 pm *by* Michele Rowland

In Attendance

<u>Virtual Meeting Only (Zoom)</u>	Emily Weber
Michele Rowland	Sally Berri Pratt
Heather Hathy	The Kellner Family
Steve DiTommaso	Julie Leaf
Michelle Murray	Jocelyn Artinger
Aimee Danley	Jennifer Payne
Emily Smoller	Denis Skorskiy
Amy Grella	A Rodden
Leah Haywiser	Joyce Divine
Heather Moore	Gretchen Barton
Jen Webler	

Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the November meeting were reviewed and approved. A motion to approve minutes was made by Dr. Murray and seconded by Heather Hathy. All present voted in favor. APPROVED

PTA Officers Reports

Treasurer's Report – Steve DiTommaso

- **Balance Update**
 - Howes About a Gift cost \$7360 and expenses were \$5800 (a \$183 check has also since cleared)
 - Netted ~\$1400
 - Dispersements and Transfers
 - Checks cleared for 6 budgeted items
 - PayPal balance moved to First National Bank
 - \$300 withdrawal to fund cashboxes for howes about a gift
 - Ending balances
 - Paypal is close to \$0, only one \$15 membership payment in there
 - First National Bank has a balance of \$20,285, includes ~\$4000 budget surplus from Sunny Funny Fair revenue

- Question: Has the spiritwear check been deposited? The check was received Nov 29 and Michele Rowland will track it down.
- New funding request
 - Virtual wolf field trip for the 5th grade
 - Aligns well to a novel they read Hatchet
 - \$200 for 45 minute presentation
 - A motion to approve the Virtual Wolf Field Trip was made by Steve DiTomasso and seconded by Emily Smoller. All present voted in favor. **APPROVED**

VP Report – Dr. Murray

- Thank you to the PTA for the grab and go breakfast!
- A few words about the 3rd grade switch to remote instruction:
 - Staffing shortages are happening at schools everywhere. Efforts have been made to make subbing attractive, but, after winter break, Covid has been hitting students and staff. Other teachers, staff, and administrators have been doing their best to cover. Teachers who have been recently sick (not with Covid) dragged themselves to work, aides, Dr. Murray, and Encore teachers were all teaching in the classroom, everyone was covering extra supervision periods. Teachers were stretched thin and it wasn't sustainable. Drs Irvin and Steinhauer agreed it was appropriate to go remote when all three 3rd grade teachers were sick and there were no subs to cover. The 3rd grade teachers who were sick even wanted to cover their virtual classes to be the most consistent for the students. Dr. Murray recognized it was a hardship for families, who then have to juggle childcare, schoolwork, and jobs/responsibilities. Hopefully after this week and the four day weekend, the teachers will be back when school meets again and that numbers will be lower.
 - Question: Have you gotten some reports on how the first day went? Dr. Murray related that a parent had mentioned being impressed with how well the first day went with Miss Kent's class.
 - A word about live-streaming, which is a popular option at secondary level. This is not good pedagogical practice for elementary students. Younger students are hard enough to engage when teaching fully online, but to do so while also teaching a classroom full of kids in front of you is really, really difficult. This method compromises the quality of instruction for everyone. Dr. Murray has instructed her staff that they should provide some level of virtual instruction, with some synchronous, but mostly asynchronous work and then check ins. If anyone has questions or concerns about live streaming, please contact Dr. Murray for a conversation regarding this.
- 5th grade transition meeting
 - This will be held at several venues, including virtual and at Howe. It will cover the course selection process and how parents can help students with this.
- The Elementary admin team meets regularly via weekly virtual meetings, daily text messages, and monthly half day meetings to talk about things that need to be consistent across all seven buildings. There can be chatter about various topics, for example why some schools get news a day before others or can get by with fewer supervisors at lunch than others. There are no ulterior motives, there are just differences between the schools and the daily schedule of the administrators. They try to be consistent where it really matters and also value that they each have to do their best for their buildings/situations.

President Report – Michele

- Updates from PTA Council
 - Steve was able to attend for Michele, although there were technical difficulties for call-ins, so he was not able to attend the entire meeting.

- One thing that did come up is it that the state of the playground equipment has been brought forward to the school board. Replacement of some playground equipment will eventually be necessary and, in the past, updates were paid for by the school's PTA and a capital campaign. Dr. Irvin met with school board to get them on board with working toward a plan to replace any aging equipment.
- One thing to note, ALL equipment is currently safe and is routinely monitored according to the facilities director.
- Updates
 - Donation to Toole Family
 - A Gift card for restaurant take out or donation to their Go Fund Me page would be appreciated. This will be voted on under new business.
- Committee Vacancies
 - Committees are well-covered, though more volunteers will be needed closer to May as some chairs will no longer have kids at Howe.
 - Should a survey be sent out to feel out potential volunteers? Yes, this will give names for the new board to reach out to.
- Reimbursement Reminder
 - Submit copies of receipts to Steve DiTomasso using the following form:
https://howe.mtisd.org/uploaded/HOWE/PTA/Documents/Forms/Reimbursement_and_funds_request_form.pdf
- Thank Yous
 - Thank you from 5th grade and Mrs. Rindels for the books.
 - Thank you from Mrs. Galardini for the books for the 2nd grade.
 - Thank you from Mrs. Raymond for the grab and go breakfast and all the PTA does
- Holiday Breakfast
 - Grab and go breakfast provided for staff by the PTA. Food services provided the food. Teachers had positive attitude and outlook and seemed to enjoy it.
 - During these stressful times, the PTA is here to support the staff and administration at Howe as well as the families in the community. The PTA's goal is to lift everyone up. Please take a moment to reach out to your child's teacher to say thank you for all they do and spread kindness during this difficult time.

Chair Reports/Recent Activities

5th Grade Happenings

- Emily Weber suggested, since fundraising opportunities are limited with Covid, to send a survey to 5th grade parents to see if instead they would rather pay a fee to opt out of fundraising
- Dr. Murray suggested using some of the PTA surplus funds for 5th grade activities.
- Pool party deposit is paid and there are also teacher gifts and other line items. Last year there was no fundraising and PTA did some special things to acknowledge them, so something similar could be done.

Howe's Got Talent

- Also Emily Weber (thanks, Emily!)
 - Things are up in the air and don't know what it will look like. Should it be in person or virtual?
- Several parents shared they really enjoyed virtual. They loved watching the video and pandemic will likely still be going on, as reasons in support of virtual.

- Michele shared that other elementary schools have done in-person, but they had to split up groups and times and it might be a logistic nightmare.
- The Webers and those present seem to prefer virtual

Scholastic Book Fair

- Planned for May 24 (the same night as Family Fun Night)
- Scholastic says it cannot be a buy one get one, because we did not have a fall book fair. It also cannot be virtual.
- Michele will touch base with the chair and Dr. Murray

Read A Thon

- Leah Haywiser gave an update. They just need to pick/order prizes and the website makes everything else easy.
- Timed to coincide with the national event Read Across America, which starts March 2

Science Fair

- No report

Cultural Arts

- Dr Murray received an email from the chairs and they will connect soon to plan.

Yearbook

- The chairs will meet this week to get the format down.
- Format will be a bit different from last year and will focus more on class pictures, student portraits, and teacher pics. Look for info in the newsletter, and a link to send in pictures.
- One idea to make 5th graders feel special – buy a yearbook for every fifth grader. Perhaps one for every fifth grader plus the usual 20 or 30 more to sell for those who forgot to order.

Family Fun Night

- No update

Spirit Center/Matt's Maker Space

- The co-chairs were emailing back and forth with Mrs. Mader this week. There is a meeting scheduled to restock and organize the maker space. No spirit center update.

Spirit Wear

- \$1069 made from the first fundraiser. Chair is planning to have another fundraiser before school is out. This fundraiser will be focused on Howe spirit wear in particular.

Howes about a gift

- This event made over \$1200 profit. Committee members have already begun working on handmade projects for next year. Parents absolutely loved the handmade stuff. Any volunteers who can make things would be very helpful. Reach out to Katie Graybill at ashgray528@gmail.com to help!

Unfinished Business

None

New Business

- Nominating Committee
 - There is still time to get in a nomination in for the PTA executive board.
 - There is also a need for a representative to be on Mellon nomination committee. Let Michele know if you are interested.
- 5th Grade Virtual Field Trip
 - Voted above, approved.
- Funding requests:
 - \$25 gift card requests:
 - Toole family. The Dad passed away from Covid. Motion to approve was made by Leah Haywiser and seconded by Jen Webler. All in favor. APPROVED.
 - Was a donation made to Jennifer Leitkam's family? Not yet, the PTA was asked to hold off, but can send out now. Motion to approve was made by Amy Grella and seconded by Leah Haywiser. All in favor. APPROVED.
 - Senora Schmidt's son had open heart surgery. Motion to approve was made by Steve DiTomasso and seconded by Leah Haywiser. All in favor. APPROVED.

Announcements

- 01.13.22 – 5th Grade Transition Meeting (Virtual and in person option)
- 01.14.22 – Last day of 2nd quarter
- 01.17.22 and 01.18.22 – No school
- 02.10.22 – Science Fair

Next Meeting

Wednesday Feb 9, 2022 at 7 pm.

A motion to adjourn was made by Emily Smoller at 8:28 pm and seconded by Leah Haywiser. All present voted in favor. APPROVED.