



**Ben W. Murch Home and School Association
General Meeting Minutes**

December 10, 2024, 7-9pm

Participants: Matt Evans (President), Allison Fitzsimmons (Vice President), Rebeca Fiet (VP Development), Hayley Love (VP Family Support), Abigail Shawn (VP Communications), Sasha Taskier (Staff Appreciation), Mr. C (Principal), Radhika Mohan (VP Community Engagement), Tianni (Secretary), Kimi Wetterauer (past-prez), Abby Bluestone (VP Communications), Lee Connery (Auction Committee), Emily Blake (LSAT Chair), Astri Van Dyke (Pre-k 4 Mom)

Principal updates:

Pre-k thru 2 and 3 thru 5 Christmas shows were this week, went well. Looking to do a bigger Christmas show next year like previous years' Festival of Lights.

Working with the ANC to get a new crossing guard. It used to be easier to get a crossing guard, but it's more difficult now. There was an incident at Reno & Davenport with a driver and some parents walking in the crosswalk. Ali suggested a safe-walking program be developed for Murch like other schools have. Rebeca suggested asking the city to put a camera there so drivers are motivated to stop/slow down. Still trying to get Ellicott and Connecticut made one-way during drop off.

Budget is finalized at 679 students. MacArthur HS has taken a good chunk of students from Jackson Reed (1700 students projected next year vs 2300 previously). This impacts us as a feeder school to JR and impacts the resources we get for SPED. Started brief discussions with LSAT. Need to examine our staffing plan. We have some SPED classes that are overfilled and some empty. It's a long process getting classes changed to better suit differing developmental issues. Currently mental and behavioral are lumped together. Overdiagnosis is an issue.

Parent Engagement Meeting - Mr. C said the parents are very engaged. Will partner with LSAT and HSA to start being more collaborative. Ali asked if we could get contact info of who is on the team; how were they selected; and how will it be going forward. Mr. C said it's a pretty in-depth questionnaire to apply. Some parents were asked to apply and some were simply interest-based.

SPED classroom support - some teachers were very thankful for the support. One teacher was upset about SPED classrooms being singled out as needing extra support.

Co-President Update, Budget Review

We have more donors this year, but donations have averaged less. Pushing Michael and Amea to ramp up efforts; extend SOS campaign, maybe a matching program. The reason numbers

don't match is bc the current number shows what we have in hand, but some people donate in payments.

There is an overage in budget from scholarships - Emily asked what's being done with that. Invoice from CLS came in this week; \$2300 will go to Amore. We go through Mrs. Miller to learn what students need. We're at 13% at-risk population. Emily said it's projected to be 12% next year. Matt said there was a situation last week where HSA paid for a child's pair of glasses and stated it's unclear how far HSA goes in helping/funding certain things. Ali expressed concern for getting involved in medical needs or any needs outside of HSA.

Alli said Katzen Karate has agreed to do an after-school karate program. He also does after-school programming and is looking to take on another school (he currently does Stoddert's after-school program). She will get a meeting set up with Mr. C to explore that option. This would likely replace CLS or Wonders. Kimi suggested reaching out to Stoddert to get their feedback on his program.

A survey was done on chess and Amore. Feedback was good. Chess is a definite hit. There were some issues with Amore, but we are going to do another session with them.

Holiday cards for Murch staff must be completed by December 16th. Kimi wrote them all last year and is divying up the work this year. The cards will get stuffed with cash and handed out before winter break. We're continuing cash gifts for now but will look at alternatives next year. HSA usually supplements this a little. Matt will get the latest staff roster. (We finished writing the cards while AT the HSA meeting this evening!)

The book fair started today, goes thru Thursday, open 8-9:30am. HSA is funding a coffee/pastries sip-and-shop in the library for parents to shop before and after. HSA funds vouchers for kids who can't afford a book so they can get one book, and buyers can also round up their purchase which gets donated to Ms. Miller's classes.

Shade structure is tabled for now bc of budget concerns. It's \$8500 for the tent, and now we need a structural engineer. Radhika suggested asking for donations, and Tianni suggested finding a parent who is a structural engineer.

An Avenger garden has been planned for DeAndre Pettus, and Casey Trees has planted a tree there. Emily said LSAT is providing some testimony about a Safe Building act that has been proposed to increase standards of security in neighborhood apartment buildings and asked if HSA wants to be involved. Ali said we need to tread very carefully, tying DeAndre's death to local buildings or other advocacy efforts.

4th & 5th grade interviews are going well.

Planning Murch Miler fundraiser - Rebeca talked to someone at Mann who runs their runs. There are 5k and 1 mile options. They don't permit or block roads - permitting takes all the profit! They have people along the course to direct, balloons, sidewalk chalk, etc to direct. They spent \$1000 and made \$25k! They make money on sign-up fee, classrooms contests (with pj or pizza parties as prizes) and sponsors who also offer t-shirts, food trucks, etc. We need to find a place to do the run, quiet streets. Forest Hills? Look at dates.

Community pizza Murch night at Pete's is December 18th.

Murch Musical is moving along. There have been more sign-ups. Will be held at UDC - they are donating the space, equipment. Ali wants to get it in writing that we have the space so they don't rent it out to anyone else.

We need to pick a date for International Night.

STEM Fair is scheduled for 20th.

Auction update - Grades will be assigned colors so parents will be able to recognize other parents in their kids' grade.

Mr. C has a cursory list of grandparents who attended grandparent's day. We need to get that list together and start communicating to them more regularly for volunteer and fundraising efforts.

Radhika

Everything for movie night cost more this year than previous years.

Planning for upcoming Christmas tree mulching. Need to book a vendor and a date.

Staff Appreciation

Thanksgiving breakfast went well.

HSA is catering Mr. C's lunch this week.

Sponsoring the nacho bar at Surfside for HH December 18th.

Mid-year restock of the teacher's lounge needed after holiday break.