



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

January 7, 2025, 7-8:30pm (virtual)

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), Abby Bluestone (VP Communications), Hilary Zwerdling (Treasurer), Astri Van Dyke (Pre-k 4 Mom), Marcy Hairston (SPED Classroom Manager), Momoko "Peach" Soltis (parent), Arriane De Govia (parent), Caren Auchman (pre-k 4)

Principal updates:

Boys basketball underway, going well, lots of parent support.

Apps for STEM fair are due on the 10th, submit by this Friday.

Heart association challenge event, cardio, prizes, learn a lot about healthy heart, 16th.

January 20th, celebrating the life of MLK Jr., continue working toward being an inclusive school.

Matt asked Abbie to make sure all of these events are added to the calendar.

International Night - Arianne is heading; Matt will send Arianne Deal event info for ideas

Co-President Update

Murch Miler - Rebeca is heading. Date is set for May 3rd, emails are in process of where to hold the event, would like to avoid permitting. Matt suggested New Year's resolution to run/exercise as marketing idea.

Auction update - Rebeca updating. Auction will be held the last Saturday of March, the 29th. Once again a skeleton crew is doing auction planning - we need volunteers, please help if you can. Rebecca proposed an idea to ask younger-grade parents to get them involved early and understand where the money comes from and how hard it is to make it. Matt suggested asking American University to donate tix or swag to be auctioned off. Possibly GW, GU, UMD as well.

Astri also suggested women's sports is hot right now, and her husband teaches at AU. Let's get more people tapping their community for auction items instead of a few people doing it all.

SOS thank you's and tax forms - We can write out thank you's at the next meeting or maybe a Comet meetup to complete them. Michael and Amaya headed up SOS and can help provide information on who gets tax forms. Let's also get an email or post out to everyone, if you donated and didn't get a tax form let us know. We're currently at \$93k, short of \$110k goal, so we'll need to keep that in mind for budgeting next year, maybe review how Murch Plus looks for next year. Abbie pointed out we have a little more than what is showing on the site right now due to matched donations not yet reflecting. Arriane and Astri asked/suggested that a pointed email solely for SOS go out this week to do a final push before Friday deadline.

Parents are still not getting all of the comms, expressing frustration. It's unclear why they are not. Mr. C said it's through Blackboard and is not an easy fix. He will work Abbie to figure out a fix.

Community needs/asks - Another ask for glasses has come in, which reintroduces the issue of boundaries around asks such as budget, responsibility, equitable need/giving, protecting confidentiality, etc. We want people to feel comfortable asking when in need but also need to figure out the direction of how to handle asks. Matt asked Hilary to update on where our scholarship fund stands as it is. We've funded several things already this year. We need to figure out where we want to spend...CLS scholarships, maybe Murch Plus is lessened, etc. Hilary said we have spent more this past year as there has been more need in the community; we do have a record of everything money is spent on. There are other resources that can help people, and we should be tapping those and not supplying everything that is needed. How do we know who is really in need? Who decides that? If you give to one, you have to give to all...it gets into murky waters. A longer conversation needs to be had about maybe writing guidelines/policy around scholarship fund distribution so we can be clear on who is entitled to what, what can be purchased, etc. Bring in Mrs. Miller for further conversation. Mr. C suggested referring back to bylaws. Arianne is willing to help with a written policy if needed.

Radhika

Murch Mulch is Saturday 12-3pm, watching weather, can switch to Sunday if needed. Need volunteers. Adbie asked if Sunday should be advertised as the back-up day. Radhika will confirm with the company so Abbie can get the flyers updated in time to go out in Friday folders. Rebeca asked if donations are cash only or if iPads are needed. Radhika said cash only. Radhika asked if we have cones to block off Davenport for the truck. Hayley said the school has cones, and Pat brings some of his own crew so not many volunteers are needed. Bring Pat cookies & coffee! Hayley had a clipboard with an envelope for donations to keep everything together.

Movie Day at Avalon - Saturday the 25th, Abi will share movie details.

Miscellaneous

Karate added to afterschool programming.

Let's make sure the food truck is a go for the STEM fair. It's a great, organic draw for people, and a portion of proceeds goes to Murch.

Peach - Had some air quality issue at son's previous school (Langley) and welcomes any interested parents to address concerns irt the connection between air quality and illness in schools. There was a quick discussion on HVAC/filter concerns at Murch, and Mr. C said planned maintenance is in place and up to date with no prior issues noted.

Mrs. Hairston - Working is on advocacy with DC Council. We are overenrolled in pre-k classrooms as there are only two schools in Ward 3, Murch and Hearst, with self-contained classrooms. Matt asked what advocacy needs there are. Mrs. Hairston said it helps for parents and staff to show up at Ward 3 council meetings. One parent mentioned last year that there were no sensory-friendly activities for their autistic child. Reach out to the SPED teachers to see how else we can include these classes.

Matt asked Mrs. Hagan to let us know if the classrooms need anything. Mrs. Hagan said the most common ask she hears often is for rugs, but it was previously not an allowable purchase. It started out that there was a grant system where funds were set aside for teachers' classroom needs, but it was too laborious to purchase all items class by class. It morphed last year into handing out \$250 to each class for teachers to spend as they needed. This year it (\$15k) was redirected to HSA President discretion - so Matt will buy everyone rugs! And Matt will notify Hilary if/how he would like to delegate how that is handled in the budget next year.

Sasha is planning to clean out and restock teacher's lounge Friday this week.

Rebeca asked Mr. C if we ever got anything official back on inflatables policy. Ali jumped in and suggested she and Rebeca have a follow-up meeting on that. Ali asked Mr. C his thoughts on budget advocacy from parents...special exception funding is not currently reflected. Mr. C would like to include a few other people in that discussion. Schedule the meeting before the next Ward 3 meeting. Mr. C suggested next Tuesday.

Bumani presentation Friday - Younger grades are presented the elements of music thru rap/live performance. Older grades will be presented the process of writing music. Ali is also working on the Patent Office and NOAH for presentations. Great work setting these up, Ali!