

Shepherd Elementary School Parent Teacher Organization

Minutes: September 18, 2019, general business meeting

Board members in attendance: Liz Bradley (President), Ayana McIntosh (2nd Vice President), Caroline Smith (Recording Secretary), Andrea Smith (Assistant Treasurer)

Absent: Taryn Losch-Beridon (1st Vice President), Lauren Benning (Corresponding Secretary), Vacancy (Assistant Treasurer).

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm. Between 60-70 people were in attendance.

Welcome from the PTO President, Liz Bradley

Updates from Dr. Hedlund

Dr. Hedlund had parents get in a circle. She conducted a brief “morning meeting” with parents, asking them to greet as many people in the room as they could. She then asked each individual to share their name and the name of their child.

She explained that “morning meeting” is being implemented in the students’ classrooms with different activities each morning. The intent is to help with community building.

Additional Announcements from Dr. Hedlund

- Dr. Hedlund announced that there is a public meeting regarding the construction project on September 26th at 6 pm.
- To date, the upper playground which serves the school has been excavated.
- They are moving that structure in order to rebuild the fence.
- They have positioned flags on the hill going down to the field.
- They have indicated that groundbreaking will start in October.
- If you would like more information, please come to the community meeting or contact Dr. Hedlund directly.

IB Updates

- Ms. Avani Mack, our new IB coordinator, started her position at the beginning of the school year.
- Ms. Larin Rottman flew to Florida and participated in an IB training for primary years.
- Ms. Mack also attended and participated in sessions which focused on navigating the IB coordinator position.
- This Saturday, Dr. Hedlund and some other Shepherd teachers will be attending an IB “bootcamp” for IB in primary years.
- There was an LSAT meeting immediately preceding the PTO meeting. At that meeting, some issues were raised about communication and family involvement.

- This year, Ms. Anna Maria Pereira, the music teacher, will be hosting a winter concert, and she is planning to put on a musical. The choices given to students will be either *Seussical* or *Aladdin*.
- Dr. Hedlund ended her updates by encouraging parents to come to the next morning meeting on Friday, October 18th.

President Bradley Opened the Floor for Questions

- A parent asked about whether the musical would be a fundraiser for the PTO or if the event would be free to the public.
- Dr. Hedlund indicated that she and President Bradley have yet to determine that.
- The PTO will provide students with the books for the musical to learn their parts.

Introduction of the Executive Board

- Liz Bradley (President)
- Taryn Losch-Beridon (1st Vice President) – was not present due to a work commitment
- Ayana McIntosh (2nd Vice President)
- Lauren Benning (Corresponding Secretary) – was not present
- Caroline Smith (Recording Secretary)
- Andrea Smith (Assistant Treasurer)

A treasurer needs to be elected.

Goals of the PTO for The 2019-2020 School Year

- Communication is a top priority.
- The PTO will also work to overhaul the website with the help of parent volunteers.
- The PTO will dedicate money toward IB training.
- The PTO will also work on evaluating the IB program this year.
- The PTO also provided teachers with their morning meeting book.
- President Bradley also indicated that they would love help on any of these initiatives from parent volunteers.

PTO Events

President Bradley shared with the group the fundraising events that have been considered for this year.

- Fall Fest, October 19th
- The Spring Gala
- T-Shirt sales
- Restaurant nights
 - Galley Week will be held from September 22-27th.
 - Blue 44 will host a restaurant night on October 29th.
- Game nights
- Movie nights

- The first movie night will be on September 27th at 6:30 pm. *The Secret Lives of Pets 2* will be shown.
- Academic focused events

President Bradley asked what the parents would like to see from the PTA this year.

- One parent would like to see web safety addressed.
- The following programs were mentioned:
 - A health fair during school hours
 - A financial education program
 - A science fair (President Bradley indicated that that would work well given the new science curriculum which is being initiated.)
- Parents would like to see the curriculum reflect the international focus that an IB school should have.

Bullying was a concern raised among parents.

- One parent asked if there were blanket rules that the school uses to combat bullying. If so, they hoped that those rules could be shared with parents so that the language used at home and in school about bullying is consistent.
- Ms. Pethel indicated that they are working on developing that standard language. She also indicated that she thought the morning meetings were helping a great deal with creating student community. She assured the people present that combating bullying as well as creating mindfulness among students is definitely a focus of the current administration.
- Some parents suggested that out of school activities where students can bond is a terrific way to combat bullying.

The Shepherd Tutoring Program

- A representative from the Shepherd Tutoring Program came to share information about the program.
- This program offers free tutoring for Shepherd students with weekly one-on-one tutoring sessions with the same tutor every week for the entire school year. Tutors are either adult or teenage members of the synagogue and other community volunteers. These tutors will go over math facts or problems, read with children for basic skills and comprehension, or work on other class assignments. For more information, email [Shepherd Tutoring Program](#) or sign your student up at <http://tinyurl.com/ShepherdTutee>.
- The program starts on October 6th and will take place from 5-6 pm at Tifereth Israel Congregation, 7701 16th St., NW (between Juniper and Jonquil - enter on Juniper).

The Kiwanis Club

- Landis Brown from the Kiwanis Club spoke.
- He let those present know that the Kiwanis Club sponsors the Terrific Kids Program.
- They are also responsible for the BUG (Bringing Up Grades) Program

- They would be willing to donate some books about bullying to the school.
- Also, they will be sponsoring a neighborhood Pancake Breakfast on Saturday, September 28th from 9 am – noon at Trinity Episcopal Church. This event will be a fundraiser.

Updates from the Treasurer

- Andrea Smith shared the budget from August with the group.
- She asked for questions.
- One question was about updating technology. Treasurer Smith indicated that all third graders will begin to get laptops starting in third grade.
- Another person asked if there could be an emergency fund.
- Another person thanked the PTO for all of their fundraising efforts.
- There was a motion to approve the budget as is. The motion was seconded.
- The budget was approved as is.

Fall Fest Updates

- Ayana McIntosh, the chair of the Fall Fest planning committee, let those present know that the event will take place on Saturday, October 19th from noon-4 pm.
- More details will be shared about ticket pricing and purchase in an upcoming PTO email.

Walk to School Day

- Karen Sloan, the chair of the Health and Wellness Committee, encouraged people to come out and support Walk to School Day, which would be held on October 2nd
- She indicated that, in addition to Marvin Caplan Park and Lowell Field, as places for families to meet up, there would be a new location this year at Shepherd park Christian Church.
- She asked for parents to donate water.
- She also asked if two parents volunteers could distribute water – one at the front entrance and one at the lower field.

Treasurer Opening

- It was announced that there was an open slot to fill for PTO treasurer.
- Karen Sloan was nominated to run.
- She was unanimously elected.

Additional Questions and Concerns from Parents

- A question arose about whether or not teachers were withholding recess as a discipline strategy. President Bradley would certainly raise this issue with Dr. Hedlund.
- Another question was raised about Star Achievers pricing. Brian Bradley, who serves on that committee, promised to check about this concern.
- He did indicate that the cost was raised for smaller children because of an additional program. The registration fee was also raised.

Final Announcements

- President Bradley reminded those present of the upcoming community center meeting.
- She also reminded everyone about movie night.

The next PTO meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 16th at 6:30 pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 8 pm.