

## PTA Meeting Minutes – Tuesday, March 1, 2016

6:08 pm. Co-President Anand Ragnath calls meeting to order. Laura Lampert seconds.

Anand asks everyone to go over the minutes from the previous PTA meeting, makes a motion to approve the minutes. Cathy Powell Manning seconds. Minutes approved.

Anand wants to let parents know the PTA is grateful they're here, and that there are many things to talk about for spring.

SLT Report – Anand said that they've been going over what they've done and what they're looking to achieve.

### Committee Reports

**Enrichment** - Cathy Powell Manning says they are trying to encourage new parents. Jennifer speaks and says we're looking for options for recreation such as Asphalt Green, PEP, etc. There are three events coming up for girls. Cathy says there are two more games coming up for basketball. Two TAG boys were selected for an all-stars game at Asphalt Green / Battery Park. We're trying to partner with the Y and get space for a girls' team. She asks to please let Enrichment know of any other gyms in East Harlem. Debate Team – A kindergarten parent is our middle school debate person, plus coach. There are four TAG students going to a city tournament on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> at the Institute of Collaborative Education. The Agape Group has tournaments as well, the kids not in that group will be going to Queens to participate. Theatre – Sara Coates has worked extra hard so we'll have a spring semester as well. Shakespeare in the Park is giving out a grant. Piano – We're looking for non-Y parents to help with Wednesday classes. Jennifer said that for the TAG chess tournament on May 20<sup>th</sup> we'll need volunteers. Anand said the newsletter was sent out today, it was his first time doing it.

**Membership** – Ilaria spoke and said we're having a class parents' meeting this Friday at 8 am to see how things are going. Also, grade-specific meetings have been scheduled and held. We are hoping to reschedule the Coffee & Tea with Ms. C. We've just started organizing the picnic, tentatively June 18<sup>th</sup>. The trip to Camelback is going to be at the end of May. Anand says that there are two major events where we need to recruit parents: tours and the picnic.

**Fundraising** – Co-chair Catherine Levine said we raised \$118,619 and have \$41,371 left toward our goal. The Superhero v. Villain dance will be Saturday, March 19<sup>th</sup>. That day will also be the Black & White theme dance party for middle school. Volunteers are needed for both events. Dave & Buster Power Cards will start to be sold this month. The PTA will earn 50% from each card. April 4<sup>th</sup> is the due date to order the power cards. April is the Silent Auction, and individual tickets are increasing from \$65 to \$75 this Thursday. The Talent Show will be in May and needs more volunteers. Jennifer asks if more specific emails can go out regarding the need for volunteers. Cathy Powell Manning suggests a sign-in sheet outside of Ms. Bruno's office. Anand says we all need to participate. Cathy said she has 23 parents who volunteers who aren't contacting her back. Ilaria said she thinks it's a good idea if the requests for volunteers are event-specific.

**Communications** – Pamela Simon says she is in desperate need for someone to take this over. She's currently revamping the PTA website, organizing our list of parents. The next Communications meeting will be next Thursday at 8:15 am.

**Budget** – Pam says if you go to the PTA website you'll see the approved 2015/16 budget. We originally allocated \$10,000 for phys ed support. We had to hire an instructor. The numbers didn't mesh so we voted to reallocate.

Anand made a motion to approve the reallocation, Cathy seconds. The reallocation of the monies is approved.

Pam says we are having one more budget committee meeting.

**Treasurers Report** – Rebecca Yoftahie said there hasn't been much activity. There was a donation from Benevity for \$750. iPledge raised another \$3,000, Valentine Grams raised \$2,747. Regarding expenses, some money went to chess and for trophies, and basketball. Total funds are approximately \$134,900.

**Principal's Report** – Principal Cesar introduces Assistant Principal Jennifer Cosme, Kindergarten teacher Ms. Kersey, 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teacher Ms. Kechen and 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher Ms. Ovink. Principal Cesar gave an update on the 5<sup>th</sup> grade moving up ceremony. Many students celebrate Ramadan so they are scheduling the party Friday, June 3<sup>rd</sup>. There will be a separate awards ceremony on June 21<sup>st</sup>. There are 3 5<sup>th</sup> grade classes, at least 99 students. We'll have the gym from 11 – 3 pm. The kindergarten moving up ceremony will be June 15<sup>th</sup>.

Website – Principal Cesar would like to recruit two parents who are webmasters to work with Mr. Aibinder to make the site look fantastic. Ms. Rivera has retired. They are hiring two school aides from the Vanderbilt Y. They will be working in the mornings starting tomorrow. One will help with students getting off of the school buses. They are helping with lunch duty.

Fire Wednesday night – Principal Cesar said that driving to work, she received a call from a teacher regarding a fire in Room 215, which houses servers for the building. She was on the FDR Drive and didn't hear anything. She called the Superintendent, who had just heard about it. At around 7:30 / 7:45 she arrived at the school. Mr. Jackson, the janitor, told her that about 11:30 the night before he smelled smoke and dialed 911. They doused everything. Circuits smoked. Communications were out. Principal Cesar and the Superintendent walked around. About 9:00 am she called Anand. The smell was lingering in hallways, not in classrooms. S.E.A. came in, did environmental tests for toxins, the report came back negative. They made the decision to keep the school open for business. Clean-up had already occurred during the night, classrooms were fine. She spoke to Anand and let him know that the powers that be opened the school up for business. By 7:30 am they signed off that the school was cleared for business. On Friday she got wind that parents were upset. She called Legal, and Legal said everything was cleared. But parents saw it on the news and were upset. Principal Cesar said that in hindsight a letter should have been sent. Moving forward she will send a letter out, would have Legal look it over.

There is to be a Town Hall Meeting next Monday, regarding safety, for District 4. Discussions will be of building lockdown protocol, evacuation protocol.

Anand apologizes for telling Hilaria to send an email out regarding the fire.

**Question & Answer Session** – Q regarding the Spanish structure in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. A – We're working with Ms. Castaldi to come up with specific learning per grade. Assistant Principal Cosme, Principal Cesar and Ms. Castaldi are working on that curriculum.

Q regarding Latin – the lack of communication / what is the goal of the class? A – It started as a pilot. We need a progress report. We're providing funds. The kids are truly involved. Ms. Kechen adds that the kids are really into it, they try to decipher words. We want to get hard data on the class.

Q regarding the website re the teacher's biographies. A – Principal Cesar says it is up to the teachers if their biographies go on the website. She can't mandate them. Qualifications can go onto the website. A parent at the meeting asked for a small tidbit of information. Processor Cesar said that we can ask them what they want to share, such as hobbies, interests. Rebecca Yoftahie asked if their education and qualifications can go onto the website. Principal Cesar said that she can give the guidelines of what the DOE requires. Ilaria said that it is useful to see the years of success, and Professor Cesar disagrees, saying that she has had a teacher here for a year who seems like he's been here for five years. Another parent said there is a part of the site that has teacher's philosophies, and Principal Cesar replied that she hears the parents and she knows you want to read about their information. Sara Coates said that if Principal Cesar can't get the teachers to agree across the board it would stir up more concerns, if parents saw that some teachers were putting their biographies up while some were not.

Q – Regarding lockers, are they working out and will there be more? A – We do not have the space to add more lockers. Some 6<sup>th</sup> graders have had to be retrained, they just couldn't handle managing them. There was garbage on the floors, lockers left open, some couldn't bother using their combination.

Q – Is the building work / repair on schedule? A- May is the prospected month for the scaffolding to come down for the roof work.

Q – What is the situation regarding how often the kids can go out for recess? A – We look for the real-feel temperature, it's day by day. They don't go out when it's raining. We go by wind-chillll factor. The goal is to get them outside as much as possible.

7:03 pm Anand moves to adjourn, Tim Oxborough seconds. Meeting adjourned.\*

\*Principal Cesar adds that we want to make communication more accessible. Share information at assembly meetings, maybe a town hall meeting every 2 months. There is nothing to hide, you should all know what is happening. She thanks everyone for their support.