

Alexander Hamilton School HSA

September General Meeting

September 13, 2011, 9:00 a.m., Media Room

Holly Goshin, Presiding

Attendance: P Arehart, J Brancato, H Brown, S Cece (2R), O Cecoltan (1M), A Crawford (3R/M), T du Rivage (2S), C Finegold (KPM), E Gifford (4M), H Goshin, D Heller, E Howe, M Kapiloff, K Paradise, N Petraitis (4B), L Pongetti (KAM), N Redmond, M Sapoff, L Sasson, J Silva (2R), K Speizer (5CR), E Spitzberg, S Stern, T Morin, M Walsh

Approval of Minutes, Goshin

Stern made a motion to approve the June HSA Meeting minutes, Sasson seconded the motion, followed by a unanimous vote to approve them.

Introductions of 2011-2012 Executive Board

President- **Holly Goshin**, 1st VP-, **Carmela Calbi** 2nd VP-, **Margaret Walsh**, 3rd VP-
Michele Sapoff, Treasurer- **Merri Kapiloff**, Secretary- **Elaine Howe**, Communications VP- **Hallie Brown**, President Emeritus- **Sandi Stern**.

Treasurer's Report, Approval of Operating Budget 2011/2012, Kapiloff

Kapiloff provided an overview of the budget process for new members. We run a budget of 32K, and throughout the year we run fundraisers to support that. We have two major fundraisers and then quite a few little ones throughout the year. For the first time, we only have two classes per grade, and so the budget has changed to reflect those numbers. That is why it might look like we took money away from certain budget items. Please look at the website for a list of things that we've purchased for the school. As the year progresses, we will discuss during these meetings how to spend HSA money. We welcome your ideas on how to spend our money to best benefit our children and the school.

Heller made a motion to approve the 2011/2012 Operating Budget, Stern seconds it and there is a unanimous vote to approve the budget.

Important news regarding tax reimbursement! We will no longer reimburse tax dollars. We are a tax-exempt organization yet we spend over \$200 a year to reimburse people for money they spent on taxes. This money is best spent on things for our students. Please keep a copy of the tax exempt in your car or somewhere handy in case you are shopping on behalf of the school. These forms are in the Treasurer's bin in the main office. Just present this form at the register when making a purchase. We do have an account at BJs and they have the tax exempt form.

Principal's Report, Irene Pierides

So glad to be working with the new board; they are wonderful. This is going to be a great year!

Our initiatives this year are a continuation of those we've done in the past; they are topics I think children should know about. Parents are working with me to make these programs possible. The Earth Day, Every Day program continues, as the children learn more about how this is their world and they need to take care of it. The activities have been very enriching and give parents a chance to participate in some fun activities. To extend that, please know there is an Environmental Club for the 5th grade. October 27th is Harvest Fest; please come and check it out. By the way, all of our committees are open to anyone and we welcome outside ideas on things that we can do.

The Nutrition Committee, lead by Janet Brancato has a variety of wonderful activities, including participating in Harvest Fest, doing tastings, breakfast in school, they created a cookbook, so many wonderful things!

Character education is more important than ever due to a new law regarding bullying that you will hear more about. (The New Jersey HIB Law.) Last year we did programs on a variety of character traits and work to develop those skills. Every class hears the same book, so that our message and the discussions are uniform throughout the school. I really feel that it comes down to self-esteem and resiliency – if kids feel ok with themselves they can give back and treat others with respect. And, they need to know what to let roll off their backs and be strong. We will review the HIB law in language that is appropriate for kids. I will talk very quickly about this law at Back to School night, because I would prefer to spend our time on other content related to our school. But there is a procedure we are required to follow, and recording forms for incidents if they are required for situations.

Husky Café is part of our manners initiative and the first one is September 21st. It's a wonderful program, and now Coleman School is doing it as well! Thanks Pat Arehart! I'd like to talk about hiring. First, let me say that Mrs. Britton is pregnant and due in January; she will be back for next fall. She is sending a letter home today to parents. You should know that Glen Rock has very high standards in hiring substitutes and permanent teachers. This is Glen Rock's way, and it's proven to be a wonderful way. Dr. Regan sets the bar at a 3.5 GPA or better, Praxis score 175 or better (out of 200) and we look for candidates that have dual certification - not just elementary certification. We get thousands of resumes and someone at the BOE sorts them. Two principals sit with the candidates for interviews and then the candidate does a demo lesson with a class. Then we consult with BOE again. It's rigorous; some candidates don't do well in the demo and if that is the case it doesn't matter if they have a 4.0 GPA. I feel we are lucky with the teachers that we do have this year.

The new/substitute teachers have a joint planning process every day, so they never work in isolation. I look for teachers that are learners, they are open, they want to do well, and they want to always improve.

Heller asked how long can the overlap be for the current teacher and the incoming substitute. Pierides noted its three days on either side of the absence, but the substitute will often come in earlier on their own time. Maternity leave is six weeks and then staff can use the Family Leave Act to stay out longer. When we know we have an opening, we invite other long-term subs if they did well and fit in at Hamilton, but often, after a stint here, these teachers are quickly hired elsewhere. Stern: There have been subs that we have so enjoyed that we really hoped they could stay forever, such as Ms. Cooney and Ms. Catalano, and in fact Mrs. Britton started as a sub. Speizer asked about Reggio and

Pierides walked through the process to bring her to Hamilton. Heller said that it's apparent that the teachers are working together and that it works really well. Pierides said having a teaching "partner" is good for the school and good for the teacher. We have a lot of twins, so it's great to have their classes match. The teachers that are out on maternity leave are not coming in for Back to School night since they are technically not out working right now.

NJASK individual reports are being mailed out on Thursday. Math scores are amazing; language arts scores are not as strong but are good (Mrs Pierides has the detailed report). For example, we need to do more work in analyzing text and writing. Sometimes if the scores are high, the state will go in and change the standards, they raise the bar if everyone does well. These tests begin in 3rd grade. Language arts is subjective, so it's hard to know who is grading and what precisely resonates with the test scorers. The writing is scored on a rubric. It is the teacher's job to find the kids that need enrichment and work with them and make them engaged in the topic. It's great to be advanced, but our goal is to be at least universally "Proficient." We can't teach to the middle, we must make sure all children get what they need.

Last year our school district let go all of our aides, and use Mission One to outsource these jobs. There is not a particular aide for each classroom, but there is support in each classroom particularly for writing and reading. Mrs. O'Neill and Mrs. D'Amato are back; we also have three new aides who are looking toward a long-term goal of being teachers so they are very enthusiastic and eager to learn. Heller: Does Mission One have a one-year contract? Could these people leave in the middle of the year? Pierides: I can't imagine them leaving in the middle of the year, I think that would be unlikely. Heller: You feel that they are committed for the school year ... Pierides: Yes. Parent workshops will be held on Language Arts and Math, please check the website for more information.

Crawford: Colonial Day has changed so much. So many elements have been dropped, and it would be great to bring the excitement and energy back. It was such a big program, and now it's not. Pierides: Every school does Colonial Day and when the teachers start planning there is room for collaboration from parents. Currently, we limit the kids to one field trip, and that is not a Hamilton decision but would be appropriate to bring up at federated meeting. I do think that it would be good, especially for the 5th grade, to go on more than one field trip. Du Rivage said she is in agreement that it could be more than it currently is. Crawford said that perhaps if parents could staff Colonial Day stations it could be more hands on. Pierides noted that Colonial Day is part of the curriculum so we try to match somewhat what is going on with other schools. Please bring your ideas to me and we will see what we can do.

On that note, there are changes that are being investigated, such as changing the report cards, etc. We are constantly looking at the content of curriculum and the way we do things to ensure that it's the best we can do.

BOE Report, Goshin

Should you be interested, please know that the Glen Rock TV channel (Cablevision - channel 77, Verizon FiOS - channel 32) carries the BOE meetings six days after the date. Heller noted that people could DVR it. Glen Rock TV has a website, as well.

The BOE is appreciative of the custodial staff, and finds that our new high school principal is doing wonderful. All committees had nothing to report. The president of the board, Rona McNabola, promoted the 5K at Hamilton, she gave the date and the contact info! Really a nice surprise to see our event promoted like this! (This info has been on the Patch and in the Gazette.)

Dr. Verducci is moving toward on-line college applications, essays, etc, everything will go through an online portal. HIB (Harassment, Intimidation, & Bullying) law training is coming up for staff and administration, this is an important but somewhat slow process as they learn the procedures.

School Fusion web site portal now provides great info for MS/HS students. After updating individual class calendars, students will receive content regarding each of those classes, such as due dates, test dates, etc.

Rebecca Robello, a GRHS student, presented a slide show on her incredible work for a Girl Scout Gold Award, a STEM camp for girls.

Communications Report, Brown

Brown asked all to please check out the HSA website for important information regarding Hamilton. The HSA website includes: the HSA meeting minutes, the calendar of all Hamilton related activities, all the forms that come home in case you need to print one out and lots of other useful information. Please keep going back to the site, as info is continuously updated. Goshin noted that the website and all email communications come from Hallie, and that the web site is amazing and has really evolved to such a professional site. The banner regarding the web site that hangs in the lobby is from **Plug Digital**, and it was so kind of them to donate that banner, it really makes a statement and we greatly appreciate it.

The deadline for any submissions for the weekly email is 8 p.m. on Wednesday night. Try to give the exact wording for any blurbs and make them no more than 3 sentences, please. If there is a form, please be aware that it will take me more time to link that, so try to send earlier if possible. My email is hallie353@gmail.com and the HSA email alexander_hamilton_hsa@yahoo.com -- and that is on the website. Brown checks the school email every day.

Event Reports, Goshin

Book Fair, chair - Carollyn Finegold. Finegold said it will be on 9/27, from 9:30 to 3:30 and then again in the evening from 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. The evening event has ice cream for \$1 per scoop, run by the 5th Grade. Theme is "Out of this World". Its all about aliens, etc, and the workers will have antennae, etc. to support the theme. I have to print up the letter and get it out to Mrs. Pierides. Set up is Monday the 26th at 3:30 p.m. and we set up the table displays, etc. Tear down will be around 9 a.m. on Wednesday, we do let last

minute stragglers shop and then everything will be packed up. **You can volunteer for the time slot that your child is there. If you would like to work at the fair in general, that is great too.** Last year we sold over \$7,000 and we earned more than 3,500 in Scholastic Dollars. (If you take Scholastic Dollars, you get more “dollars” than just taking it in cash.)

5K Run and Family Fun Day, chairs - Michele Sapoff, Holly Goshin, Donna Famularo, Sandi Stern. Please see all the details on the Hamilton Web Site! Our event is Oct 9th at 8:30am. We have a lot of sponsors and are looking for more – even if it’s just your dentist donating \$100! We are going to send out another sponsor email tonight. There is a wide range of sponsorship levels from \$100 and up. Please do come out to the 5K. The football players come from the high school, track team members come -- the more people, the more sponsors. Our presenting sponsor is **PROMINENT TICKETS** and have generously donated \$3,000. Please contact Sapoff if you have any questions or ideas for sponsors. Just come, please come, so that our numbers are strong! Emails have been sent to the cross-country coaches. Stern reminded everyone that the event is 50% about raising money for the school and 50% about having a fun day to get kids and families together -- to make it a social event for the kids. There will be a bounce house, sand art, face painting, etc. Some of these activities are a \$1 donation (which just covers the cost of the activity). Stern needs volunteers for the fun stuff. Sapoff is good on volunteers for the general event.

Picture Day – Goshin noted we still need a picture day volunteer. Sasson said she would do it.

Bingo Night – Goshin noted that someone is thinking about organizing it. And so maybe we have someone, but if you are interested in running it, let me know.

Boiling Springs, chair - Walsh said that if you have an account or are interested in opening an account, we would get quarterly earnings from those accounts. This does not detract in any way from your account or your own interest. If you open a new kids account with \$10, Boiling Springs will add \$10 to the account. We need three or four more to qualify. My kids got a piggy bank, a little book on saving tips, and the people there couldn’t be any nicer! Great opportunity for Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts accounts.

Grocery Scrip, chair - Ann Teicher, nothing to report.

Box Tops, Chair - Brown, nothing to report.

KidsStuff, chair – Silva, nothing to report.

OctoberFest, chairs – Stern and Eileen Murphy – The event is warm and wonderful, you can really meet genuinely lovely people! It’s October 22 at 8:00 -- its just pure social fun. There will be more in the news about it coming; if you want to volunteer please contact me.

Francesca’s Pizza Night, chair - Maryann Lyon – 10% of Hamilton orders go back to us. It’s a great time to go to Francesca’s, you’ll see lots of Hamilton families and it will be very fun.

Movie Night, chair - Gifford said December 5th is the first movie night. There will more to come.

FYI, HSA meetings alternate between night and day to accommodate people that work and people that are home.

Upcoming Events, Goshin

- 9/19 Francesca Pizza Night
- 9/21 Back to School Night, 7pm
- 9/27 Book Fair/Family Night 6-8pm
- 9/27 Pizza Day
- 9/28 School Picture Day
- 9/29 NO SCHOOL
- 9/30 NO SCHOOL
- 10/6 Subway Day
- 10/7 KidsStuff fundraiser begins- Ends 10/21
- 10/9 Hamilton 5K Community Run
- 10/10 NO SCHOOL
- 10/13 Kindergarten Coffee with the Principal, 7:30pm
- 10/17 Francesca's Pizza Night
- 10/18 Bagel Day
- 10/18 HSA Meeting –7:30 pm

Discussion Items, Goshin

We will need to create Wish List for this year, please think about it.

New Business, Goshin

K Stephenson wanted Goshin to mention that her 1st grader had a challenge in figuring out the lunch process. Another mom had a similar comment. Pierides will look into it, but noted that every year there is a little confusion. Walsh asked if the Peer mediators will be back, and Pierides said yes but it will take a few weeks to get started.

Adjournment, Goshin

Stern made the motion to adjourn, seconded by Walsh; unanimous vote to adjourn.

Respectfully Submitted,
Elaine Howe