

April 9, 2010
Hommocks Middle School

PT Council Minutes

Meeting was called to order by President Cindy Habig at 9:25am.

- I. Hommocks Middle School Presentation (Dr. Seth Weitzman)
 - a. Middle School 101: Middle school movement began about 40 years ago. These years represent a unique stage of development and education has to be targeted to the developmental needs of this stage. Children are different and special at this age - changes are social, emotional, physical and cognitive:
 - i. Friendships grow
 - ii. Brain development is accelerated
 - iii. Dramatic physical development
 - b. Middle School Turning Points: powerful force in the idea of having middle grade schools and to help every young person thrive during adolescence.
 - c. There is a large body of research that shows the effectiveness of middle schools and how it creates a higher level of achievement in high school and higher self esteem overall.
 - d. There are 7 essential elements for an effective middle school:
 - i. Philosophy
 - ii. Educational Program
 - iii. Organization and Structure
 - iv. Classroom Instruction
 - v. Educational Leadership
 - vi. Academic and Personal Support
 - vii. Professional Education
 - e. Hommocks is the 2nd largest middle school in Westchester County. However, due to the "house plan," it doesn't feel that way. Currently Hommocks is divided into 4 houses with 3 teams each, one per house for each grade; each team has 80-100 students. Each house has its own teachers, facilities (i.e., classrooms, lockers near the classrooms, etc.) and support (special education, counselors).

- f. Hommocks believes strongly in hands on learning – from building hurricane proof structures in technology to making science come to life at Sharpe (7th grade trip) to the culmination of learning American History through the 8th grade trip to Washington D.C.
- g. Extended Academics: Hommocks uses “team time” for extended academics – allowing for hour long classes in math, science, social studies and English. These extended periods add up to 20 extra days of just academics.
- h. Super Teams for 2010-11: This new structure will affect 6th and 8th grades. These grades will have 3 teams instead of 4. This change will decrease the budget by about \$500,000 without impacting class size substantially since these grades are considerably smaller than the 7th grade (which will continue to have 4 teams). Two of these teams will have the standard amount of students and one “super team” will have about 50% more – and will share teachers. It is very likely that for the 2011-2012 school year, we will have to return to the 4 team system since the 6th grade looks like it will be large again that year.
- i. Discussion arose regarding the bridges between the Elementary schools and Hommocks and Hommocks and the High School. These transitions are getting better but are still a work in progress. The transition, specifically related to the math curriculum (accelerated math, honors, etc.) is an issue when entering the high school. Rick Marsico suggested setting up a meeting with Annie Ward to discuss this further and possibly including it in the board goal-setting process.

II. District Calendar Process (Debbie Manetta)

- a. It is time again to work on the district calendar. Debbie will send input instructions via email by next Friday (make sure everyone sends her an email with their new incoming Co-President information).
- b. Debbie will put all the major dates on the calendar by April 23rd. From April 23rd to about May 10th, the on-line draft calendar will be open for inputting. It would be helpful to work out conflicts among schools prior to the big calendar meeting on June 7th. Make sure to input correctly, using approved abbreviations, etc. Similar to last year, the calendar will also be translated into Spanish.

III. Board Updates (Rick Marsico)

- a. The search parameters have started for the new high school principal. Dr. Fried has invited the new Superintendent (Dr. Shaps) to meet with him and be involved in the process.
- b. The Board is very excited about the new Superintendent. After an intense search process, Dr. Shaps emerged as the right person with the right qualities for the district at this time. These qualities include:
 - i. Great educational leadership
 - ii. Well versed in administrative aspects (i.e., budget)
 - iii. Creative with appointments (hiring, positions)
 - iv. Knowledgeable about financial matters
 - v. Hard working
 - vi. Understands this community (Westchester)
 - vii. Combined communities - bringing diverse groups together (creating new high school in Massachusetts)

IV. Budget Vote Meeting Details

- a. Chatsworth is leaving the budget meeting as scheduled (night) but will also add a daytime meeting. Central changed its meeting to April 22nd. SEPTA will join the High School/Hommocks meeting.
- b. We need clear communication on the budget before these meetings. There have been so many changes that people are unsure of what is in and what is out of the final recommended budget. For example, there is now \$50,000 for Field Trips in the budget and ½ the budget for Constitution Works and Lincoln Center has been restored. This information needs to be clearer before the vote.

V. Bulk Mail

- a. New post office requirement: if bulk mail has Address Return language and the mail gets returned, the post office will charge for each returned piece (.50). However, if it says "or occupant" on the name line, it will not get returned and there is no charge. For budget communications, we need to add "or occupant" so that there is no charge for returns.

Meeting adjourned at 11:45am.

Respectfully submitted,
Lori Herbsman

In Attendance:

PTC: Cindy Habig, Co-President, Melany Gray, Co-President; Lori Herbsman, Secretary; Laurie Lee, Technology; Laurie Girsky, Jean Meyerowitz, Communications; Rina Beder, Legislation/Teacher Institute
Central: Jennifer Malherbe, Co-President
Chatsworth: Joan Capaldi, Co-President
Mamaroneck Avenue: Jennifer Vaccaro, Co-President
Murray Avenue: Ann LoBue, Tracy Owen, Co-Presidents
SEPTA: Cecilia Absher, Amy Lieberman, Co-Presidents
District: Debbie Manetta, Director of Communications
School Board Liaison: Rick Marsico
Guests: Dr. Seth Weitzman

Approved: 4/3/10