

Alexander Hamilton School HSA

January General Meeting

January 17, 2012, 7:30 p.m., Media Room

Holly Goshin, Presiding

HSA Attendance: H Brown, C Calbi, O Cecoltan, D Famularo (1M), H Goshin, E Howe, S Needleman, S Prebola, N Redmond (1M), M Sapoff, J Silva (2R), K Speizer (5RC), S Stern (4B), K Stephenson (1C), K Verkem, M Walsh, J Weber (4M&2S)

Approval of Minutes, Goshin

Kapiloff made note of an error on the posted draft version of the November minutes: That the reserve fund is \$15,000 not \$50,000. That edit will be made to the final November minutes to be posted to the website soon.

Sapoff made a motion to approve the November minutes with this noted revision; Walsh seconded that motion, followed by a unanimous vote to approve them.

Treasurer's Report, Kapiloff

The budget is not much different than November meeting. Again, we need to spend the account raffle money as soon as possible. Goshin asked if that money can be spent on the mural, and Kapiloff said it most likely needed to be materials for the students. Verkem noted that the original raffle permit would note what that money could be spent on.

The Boiling Springs account should soon show \$100 in profit, per Walsh. This amount is a quarterly payout. Please do encourage in-laws, etc., to bank at Boiling Springs or link existing accounts.

Certain figures with further explanation are noted with asterisks. For example, held money for bagels, pizza, etc. includes profit. We need about \$600 to be paid out but we'll have about \$6,000 in profit.

Our available funds total \$11,656. Please review the sheet to see how the money has been spent.

Money is coming in from different sources, such as Amazon (\$31), Box Tops (\$715 before postage), Francesca (\$140) and Movie Day (\$156). Please note that Movie Day is not usually a profitable activity but due to a past error on the Theater's part, they charged us less for the tickets and that created revenue for us.

Principal's Report, Irene Pierides

Parent Workshop: Joe Galasso is coming to Hamilton to speak about overall childhood wellness, anxiety, and self-esteem. Central School recently did a Galasso presentation that was different than ours - ours will only be Hamilton families and he will discuss specific issues that have been decided on prior to the event. The event for parents is Feb 2nd. Galasso will also spend 45 minutes with each individual class from grades 3-5; this activity is January 24th.

Character Education: A new theme for the month is celebrating children and how incredible each one is. Booklet with questions that will come home - really wonderful questions - that you can fill out with your kids. We recently did an assembly using our Kindness Tree flowers, focusing on the little things the kids do to make life better for others.

Assemblies: Day in Clay is for 4th grade, Glassworks is for 3rd grade, and the Earths Journey program (entire school) will be scheduled.

Husky Café: Continues to be a great success; many thanks to the parents that organize and run this!

Lunch Time & Allergies: We are working on our lunchtime process to do the best we can to help our lunch aides best serve the students with allergies and allow everyone their free time. Students in Grades 1-3 have 20 minutes to eat, and then the older children come in to eat. If younger children aren't finished, we move them to another table to finish to make room for the older children. Eventually the whole school goes outside, which is great so that kids can mingle and mix together.

Children are sitting by class so that the lunch aides can hand them their lunch, rather than waiting in line. There are marked seats for allergy students, so that the aides can check the lunches around the allergy child. It is important that we can look out for the kids that need our help, and they are easy to find this way. The kids from grades 1-3 must wash hands after lunch to avoid spreading any allergy contaminants. Kids coming in from outside must wash their hands before lunch.

Prebola asked if 3rd graders need to sit with their class? Pierides said yes. In the older grades (4th & 5th) the kids can sit with anyone in their grades; it is not confined to the class division. The younger grades need to sit by class.

Pierides clarified that Grades 1 and 2 need to wait until the entire class is done, because the aides that are with them need to go outside with them. She also noted that 3rd, 4th and 5th grade students can go outside as soon as they are done eating, as there are aides outside already.

Cox asked why don't the older kids wash their hands after lunch? The younger kids have to wash, but the older kids don't need to? My 6 year-old doesn't understand at why the others don't wash their hands, and he

might touch some thing that a 4th or 5th grader has touched [with fingers perhaps laden with allergens such as peanut butter.] Pierides said it is impossible to control each child. [Further clarification: We encourage hand washing before and after lunch for all our students. It is our hope that parents will instill and encourage the behavior at home and in school so that they move through the process quickly and make the most of their recess time. It is important to build independence and responsibility with these health habits in our older students.]

Question was asked about the other schools in the area, and AOO is not peanut- or tree nut-free in lunch but it is in the classroom. Walsh noted that every school is different, but we happen to have a large number of allergy kids at our school. Her understanding is that wheat, soy, etc. are not as much anaphylactic issue as tree nuts and peanuts. She is meeting with Mrs. Wright and Mrs. Pierides to discuss how to make it safer. Prebola asked if the kids are being spoken to? Yes, Mrs. Wright has spoken to all the classes about allergies.

Cox noted that her ideal would be a nut-free school. She said that the school is supposed to be a safe place, but Hamilton is not a safe place for her child [if there is a possibility of contact with peanut or tree nut products]. Stephenson noted peanut butter is the main source of protein for one of her children.

Cox added that there is a private support group that help as requested by different communities and they will go to the BOE, or do whatever they can to help the allergy parents get to that solution. Walsh asked if anyone has ever asked for nut-free school? No, no one has asked but that is a question for Verducci, not Pierides.

Can we go back to having an allergy table? Pierides said by law we can't do that, its segregation. She can't call it the allergy table. A parent noted that Central School rules are that if a child brings in a peanut product for lunch, that child needs to sit at another table.

Pierides said that we have been lucky for the most part; every school has been lucky so far. She talks to allergy parents and keep up with allergy policies and information, and is open to having any parents come in and talk to her about it. Walsh is forming the committee, with allergy parents and other parents that don't have such allergies in their families - all are welcome to look at possible solutions.

Prebola said, as class parent, it's so hard to get the details from parents about snacks regarding allergens for class parties. Goshin will send an email to younger class parents that says parents must tell the class parent what food they are sending in and they cannot change the food once the email to the class has been sent by the class parent. Allergy parents can then contact the person sending in the food if they have a question. Stern noted that families with allergies can choose to divulge

but the class parents don't get details on who has an allergy from the school due to privacy laws. Pierides said that she is open to do anything to help make the process safer. She welcomes allergy parents and non-allergy parents to implement more and more steps to be safer. She stressed that this issue is life and death, and so she very much concerned with supporting parents and the children.

Lockdowns: There was concern that children came home scared that this was a "real" lockdown but didn't know what the threat was. Verkem said that kids were scared and the information they got wasn't what it could or should have been. [Further Clarification: Lockdowns have become commonplace to our students, just as fire drills have. The only difference with this one was that it was a bit longer than the previous ones we've done monthly. Teachers did their best to explain what the situation was, that it was necessary to have the lockdown, and that everything truly was okay. There is also the big issue of confidentiality limiting what can be communicated. In the future, information will be provided when there is an issue of school wide concern.]

Sapoff noted that Miss Gloede is doing a great job; she was a perfect fit for Mrs. Britton. Congratulations to Mrs. Britton, who had a boy!

Communications, Brown

Weekly Announcements: Please remember that the deadline is 8 p.m. on Wednesday for the upcoming Hamilton News weekly email. Stephenson asked about Kindergarten communications, particularly in regards to the upcoming Science Fair. Goshin stated that it will be communicated to them.

Advertisements: The HSA will now have a single page with advertisements on it that will be linked to the Hamilton HSA home page, and will be mentioned about once a month in the weekly email. It will be a stand-alone page on which any local business can advertise. The program begins on February 1st and is pro-rated at about \$25 a month. The ads will remain in place through August. Once the ad is placed, we hope that there will not be any changes to the ad; the agreement is that it will be done and that this project will not become time intensive for the HSA volunteer managing this page.

We have many great offers for fundraising and promotional events at Hamilton, but we struggle with many peoples' concerns that we have too many fundraisers at the school. This ad page gives Hamilton families a

chance to let other Hamilton families know about their businesses. This ad page does not mean that the HSA is endorsing anyone or any product. Verkem asked business-side questions, such as how would this drive traffic through the door? There was a question about why not just have a page of Hamilton family businesses, that doesn't require families to pay to advertise?

Goshin said it's not worth the issues she would face to deal with putting all the companies attached to Hamilton (families or donors) on the website. On the business side, I don't know what the benefits are, and we aren't promising anything; we aren't even actively promoting this around town. The revenue for the HSA, whatever it is, is useful.

In the future, we will re-write our sponsor levels for the large fundraisers, and that might be a value-add to the sponsors. That is up to the discretion of the fundraising committee.

Speizer said she is absolutely against the ads, and that our homepage would not even accommodate ads. Why are we doing this? Ads don't belong on the Hamilton web site.

Cox noted that she is happy to see the HSA do this and is glad to have a place for our community to see that she has a business and that she would really love for people to come to Fred Cox Merchandising and support us. I think this is a great community service, and many people would like to support local businesses. And, this is essentially a donation, and Goshin agreed, it's a tax write-off to give money to the school.

Stern noted that we are really into passive fundraising because we have done so many fundraisers and it's become overwhelming. Sometimes, the business transaction and relationship don't work and so it becomes very awkward. We still want to support local families, but can't endorse them. A vendor page is a nice thing to offer, but we can't do that. This was our solution.

A question was asked about the hierarchy, in what order will the ads appear on the site? Goshin said it's first come, first serve.

Weekly Emails: Verkem noted that the HSA emails seem too frequent. Is the policy weekly -- or what is going on? Also, she doesn't like the red color. Speizer agreed that she doesn't like the red color either. Stern noted that there isn't a policy to have just one email so there has never been that precedent. Brown said she is happy to take suggestions on color for the background of the emails.

Vote on Funds for Library Mural, Goshin

Previously, Heather Josack painted the library mural. We have an estimate for her to add more color to the library, to include the walls that

have not yet been painted for approximately \$1,525. She could also paint the front and back of the music room doors (or two other doors) for an extra charge.

Concern is that the library might be too dark with more blue but perhaps the artist could bear this in mind and could come up with a plan to add color but not make it look darker.

Conversation was had about the merits of painting doors and about the possibility of a gym mural. Stern and Brown noted that the doors to the music room look colorful and nice that the kids painted them, which is very appropriate.

Many were in favor of a gym mural. Cox said maybe we could consider having the high school students could do a mural, as they painted murals at GR High School and they looked great.

Stern said that Mrs Menke said that the art club would paint the art room. Goshin asked if there were any more questions regarding the library, and there were not.

Goshin made a motion to approve HSA funds not to exceed \$1,525 to cover the cost to finish the mural in the library. Kapiloff seconded the motion, and a unanimous vote approved this motion.

Event Reports

Spirit Wear: Sapoff noted that every piece is in and out to the students. We worked with Jenny from the Rock, it went smoothly, and we made about \$1,525 dollars. Several positive comments were made that this was exactly the amount needed to finish the library, and it was great to have these funds.

Bingo Night: Goshin noted that we pushed it a little, and the response was astounding! We are at maximum capacity, which is 215 in our tables and chairs. Let's all be patient and manage expectations, since we have never done this before. It will be very light snacks, bingo boards, etc. Sapoff and Goshin are helping Kathleen Schmidt, who is in charge.

Upcoming events

Please note that the Federated HSA meeting is at Central.

Francesca's night is Tuesday this month.

Elizabeth Gifford runs Movie Day and will let us know what that movie is closer to the date. It will be at 1:30. Stern suggested that we get a concession for snacks.

April 21st is the date for our Spring Fundraising event, to be held at the Community Church.

- 1/19 Federated HSA Meeting at Central
- 1/20 3rd Grade Husky Café
- 1/2 Bingo Night–7pm
- 1/21 Green Day at Recycling Center
- 1/24 Pizza Day
- 1/2 Francesca Night
- 1/30 Early Dismissal/Movie Day TBD
- 2/2 Dr. Joe Galasso Parent Workshop–7–8:30
- 2/2 Subway Day
- 2/7 Bagel Day
- 2/8 Report Cards
- 2/13 Francesca Night

New Business

Our next fundraising project is playground equipment, particularly a swing set. The ballpark for this is about \$12,000 and is tied to the spring fundraiser.

Please note that the fans have been repaired; they were not working properly. The District has advised against getting more fans because they will be very noisy. Everyone has an inter-write board and our technology is up to date. (Most recently, Mr. Diomedes received an inter-write board through funds directed by Kathy Regan.)

Speizer said that when the Boy Scout groups are here in the evening or sports teams on the weekend she finds the floors are a mess, the bathrooms are messy, and the gym floor is not clean. Cox agreed. Pierides said that she was surprised because the district has done independent inspections, and questionnaires completed by the teaching staff about overall cleaning have gotten great feedback. She said that she would look into it but asked that any complaints be brought to her right away because it's much easier to address them with the cleaning staff as they happen rather than a month later.

Motion to Adjourn, Goshin

Stern made a motion to adjourn; Kapiloff seconded that motion.

Respectfully Submitted,
Elaine Howe