

Attendance: (21) Mary Beth Ausman, Kimberly Baker (G), Carola Cardenas (G), Angela Concha de Hernandez, Angela Daley, Kndyia Fisher (G), Christine Haynes, Tracy Jenkins, Carrie Marshall, Chelsea Mellon, Laura Miller (G), Genie Ombach, Maria Papanikolaou, Pilar Pohlheber (G), Lorree Riley, Danielle Stallings (G), Susannah Stewart, Jenell Stradford (G), Paola Strand, William Taylor, Leah Zanville

1. Welcome: by Co-President L. Zanville at 7:34am
2. Minutes: approved for February 13th meeting, motioned by M. Papanikolaou, 2nd by W. Taylor, approved by (21) votes.
3. Financial Report: by W. Taylor
  - a. Reports provided for review.
  - b. Direct Give- we met our goal for the year! We have brought in \$15,570 this year. And though we are hoping to bring in new revenue sources, on the revenue side, we are done. Matching gifts has been an especially bright spot this year as well. Compared to the \$550 brought in last year, we have brought in \$2250 in matching gifts this year.
  - c. W. Taylor has spent a lot of time breaking out a lot of the categories of expenditures in the budget. Business partners, for example, consist of Harris Teeter and Amazon Smile. But, Spirit Night is the other half of that category. This year, we earned \$550 through spirit nights vs. \$290 earned last year. These categories also allow us to see fundraising expenses like yard sale signs and credit card fees. We earned \$1200 from yard signs this year so that's a good money maker for us.
    - i. L. Zanville asks if we have a good stock of signs. W. Taylor replies that we didn't buy yard signs this year, but we did purchase stakes.
    - ii. G. Ombach asks where we are with teacher grant funds. W. Taylor says that we have approved 3-4 grants this month that will get paid out. We have approved \$4450 of \$5000. L. Zanville says that last year we struggled to get teachers to apply for grants and this year, we are really trying to grow this program so we can push the dollars back into the school.
    - iii. L. Riley asks what the turnaround time is for receiving funds in the teacher grant program. L. Zanville responds that the response time is usually less than a week. W. Taylor states that there is still \$550 remaining for the school year.
  - d. Breaking out these expenses helps committees understand their budgets. And we are working on memorializing these important details on the PTSO Google Drive.
  - e. One online comment: It might help to have quarterly reminders about the teacher grant program. M. Papanikolaou mentions that she reminds people at every SIT meeting.

4. Student Advocacy Report: by L. Zanville
  - a. Paola Strand joins to discuss the unveiling of the Nest (previously called the Clothes Closet). We have a dedicated trailer in the back of the school near the football field - for confidentiality. P. Strand has already received two emails requesting "shopping days." We are taking a momentary pause in collections while we get established. The PTSO gave a grant for shelving units and there has been a generous response from families and teachers. We asked for things for all ages, babies to adults, and photos will be shared as it gets set up and we will figure out a system to share reminders and requests.
    - i. We hope to collect seasonal outfits, prom and graduation gowns, dress clothes and shoes. If time allows, she would also like to collect nonperishables.
    - ii. C. Haynes mentions that Ms. Whitley said that teachers try to pay attention to children that can't afford graduation gowns. They don't press the close-toed dress code for this reason as well.
    - iii. M. Papanikolaou suggests that the school switch to black with blue tassels so we can recycle them year after year. K. Fisher states that this would be a great target for corporate partnerships.
    - iv. P. Strand mentions that we still have a need for new socks and underwear (a lot of kids need medium and large).
    - v. P. Strand points out that reusing clothing is a great part of protecting our environment and keeps clothes out of the landfill. 98-99% of items donated have been in good used condition. However, some things being donated are stained and are turned over to Goodwill. Genie points out that there is also cloth recycling in Meck Co.
    - vi. In the future, we will need a way of promoting sizes and items of particular need. Perhaps a "Nest Corner" in the newsletter so we can promote what is needed. We also can encourage families to come help sort and organize.
  - b. L. Zanville states that there is also a young man who is making the Nest his Eagle project this year. He will be building a changing area.
  - c. This will be P. Strand's last year in her position with East. She wants to leave everything up and running. This will be a huge loss. L. Zanville mentions that we need to have a plan in place so everything runs smoothly. She has been reaching out to feeder schools and coordinating with them.
    - i. K. Fisher states that Paola has been so helpful and will be greatly missed. C. Cardenas agrees that Paola has been incredibly helpful and there isn't another one like her.
  - d. L. Zanville briefly touches on period equity and her interest in using the PTSO to highlight that in the school in the future.
  - e. L. Zanville introduces Multilingual Family Night
    - i. It's an opportunity for parents who don't speak English or who speak multiple languages.

- ii. Plans so far: International House, church global services, Meck Co. to bring vaccines for free, food trucks, vendors, lots of interpreters for all languages, counselors will be here, teachers will be here - trying to have translators at every station. Paola has requested 6 translators from CMS (Turkish, Russian, Portuguese).
    - 1. Genie suggests that the school put the list of languages out in case some of our parents can help with translations.
  - iii. L. Zanville is trying to get in touch with Coach Fowler to figure out if Dragonfly has a multi-language option. Heart of the Champion is being pushed out, and the county offers free periodic physicals. So, how are we getting the information to the families?
  - iv. K. Fisher (online) states that there will be at least one member of GPS in attendance. Kids translating could also get volunteer hours. L. Zanville mentions that the same night, IB is also having a welcome night for 9th graders, so they plan to collaborate.
  - v. L. Zanville also mentions the nonprofit that helps highschoolers apply to college: Gen-1. More information will be sent out soon.
5. Staff Events and Appreciation Report: by L. Zanville
- a. Unexpectedly, the church next door stepped in and donated for the last staff event. We are looking forward to Teacher Appreciation week in April. Dyette and Stacy have a theme for each day. There is a big chunk for expenditures, but they will be collecting gift cards from parents and hopefully from businesses too. Everyone is feeling the weight of this year at this point.
6. Website Update: by G. Ombach
- a. We are standardizing things and we are creating individual folders for each committee on the Google Drive. G. Ombach has created one for each committee and each committee chair on the drive. If you need help using it, or have lost your link, reach out to Genie. Genie is also documenting all the techie things she does so that she can pass it on if necessary. She has a meeting with T. Brown later this week.
  - b. L. Zanville points out the Genie holds the entire organization together.
7. Communications Report: by Angela Daley
- a. The newsletter launched using Benchmark, which is what RMS uses. The goal is to have something people can have every Tuesday. Now people need to get information by the end of Monday. The only hiccup was that the link doesn't work within the CMS equipment. We want the newsletter to go beyond just our member list. Sending it on parent square is huge for us, so that it is able to go to one platform. We welcome any recommendations to add or change.
  - b. K. Fisher adds that she loves the turnaround and increase in communication. It's so helpful.

8. Nominating Committee Update: by Kimberly Baker
  - a. A reminder to all members that we have sent out a survey to all members to help us prepare for the 2024-25 school year. Please search for that link and fill it out so that we can get an idea of what to expect for next year.
  
9. Open Discussion (open to all):
  - a. Susannah Stewart discusses school based mental health services. Any counselor or teachers can identify children in need. These licensed mental health providers are licensed social workers or licensed mental health counselors. In our school it's just a licensed counselor. The school counselor initiates the referral, which goes to the district. Traditionally they were offered in-person, but they are going to all-virtual appointments due to access to care. They do have Spanish speaking therapists, but they are finite. It's a bridge because there is such a shortage. There is a "calm down" room here in the student service area. The room can also be used for distress (sadness/anxiety). They have sensory items, coloring materials and permission to use the room is given on a case-by-case basis. We currently don't have a therapist assigned.
    - i. MB. Ausman asks if we share with another school. S. Stewart says it's shared throughout CMS. She worked at West Charlotte and it didn't occur there. L. Zanville asks historically, how many people are in the queue? S. Stewart doesn't know and says she will try to find out, but since there is a mental health crisis, there seems to be kids having constant panic attacks and issues.
    - ii. MB. Ausman asks if we know on the district level if there is a plan to train students. Her daughter wants to use the arts to deal with daily mental health struggles. Questions were brought up about student mental health club and strategies to pull out when they are needed.
  - b. MB. Ausman mentions the freshman class discipline issues and chronic absenteeism mentioned in the Friday weekly update. 60% of freshmen are failing at least one class.
    - i. K. Baker points out that this needs to be a conversation with families and advocates that parents need to be a part of the solution.
    - ii. C. Mellon suggests that behavior is indicative of a greater issue and there is a need to discover what is behind the absenteeism.
    - iii. P. Pohlheber suggests that transportation might be causing this absenteeism and affecting the most vulnerable students.
  - c. L. Zanville points out that the 75th anniversary of the school is next year. She had a meeting with Mr. Parker to coordinate the planning in advance since it's a potential boom for alums and families. We are going to recommend a planning committee - staff, faculty, alums.
    - i. L. Zanville reached out to MPHS foundation. They have a 2m endowment with \$260k to push into the school each year. There is an East Meck Foundation, but it was never endowed. It's been several years since it has

had any movement or employed staff. Hopefully, we can get it refunded and reinvested during this 75th anniversary year.

- ii. C. Haynes nominates Leah to lead the foundation. L. Zanville laughs and says there is a lot on the horizon for us next year. We are being good stewards of our money. And we are being impactful. The school is growing and the need is growing.
- d. L. Zanville mentions Jennifer Roberts - former mayor an alum - might be willing to help get students registered to vote. M. Papanikolaou mentions that Leo Hernandez has been doing that this year with a few separate drives to get kids to vote.
- e. K. Fisher closes out the meeting by thanking everyone who responded to her calls earlier this year because those volunteers have really helped us fill in the gaps this year. Chelsea and Genie do a lot. Any other parents considering a position next year should reach out because this is a great way to make a difference.

10. L. Zanville adjourns the meeting at 8:37am