

Townsend Harris Alumni Association, Inc.
Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors (as approved on March 23, 2022)
January 5, 2022 at 7:00 PM
Location: Teleconference

The following directors were present and constituted a quorum: Principal Brian Condon, Karen Curzio, Jillissa Drayton, Ben Fung, Shari Gruber, Peter Lee, Dr. Selina Lee, Debra Michlewitz, Alysa O'Shea, Craig L. Slutzkin, Lara Traum, David Zarowin.

- I. Co-President Craig Slutzkin called the meeting to order at 7:07 PM. Dr. Selina Lee introduced the new PTA liaison Alysa O'Shea to members of the board who could not attend the last meeting. She also congratulated Ben Fung on his election to the Executive Board.
- II. **Approval of Board Meeting Minutes**. The Board reviewed the minutes of the November 16, 2021 meeting. There were no comments or corrections; therefore, the minutes are accepted as issued.
- III. **Board Calendar**. The Board discussed dates of future meetings as well as in-person versus virtual.
- IV. **Executive Committee Reports**. Mr. Slutzkin and Dr. Lee presented.
 - A. The school has re-opened after the Winter Break. On January 4, attendance was 80%, a low number for the school reflecting that we are still in pandemic times.
 - B. Selina Lee presented updates about the SLT meetings. At the last meeting, the SLT discussed the issue of the return of a formerly removed teacher and the school's response, and about the funding for the Bridge Year program.
 - C. The annual Legislative Breakfast is scheduled for January 21 and will showcase a live demonstration of a Humanities Seminar.
 - D. The Board discussed the return of the previously removed teacher, which received significant attention from both the school and city press. Many members of the school community were outraged.
 - a. The Alumni Association sent a letter to Mayor de Blasio with copies to the Chancellor and several other parties (elected officials, DOE officials).
 - b. To date, there has only been one response – from Senator Toby Stavisky – who acknowledged the email.
 - E. Mr. Slutzkin reviewed website progress.
 - F. Mr. Slutzkin updated the Board on Kevin Kim, Class of 1988, who was appointed to President Biden's Presidential Advisory Commission to address racism including Asian hate crime and has also been appointed as the New York City Commissioner of the Department of Small Business Services. Mr. Kim also is a member of the CUNY Board of Trustees.
- V. **School Report**. Principal Condon reported.
 - A. The Superintendent's semi-annual review of the school took place today. Deputy Superintendent Gibson did the review and visited classrooms.

- B. Principal Condon commented on the issue of the return of the previously removed teacher. He reiterated that the safety of students was his top priority and he would never allow students to be put into positions where they were uncomfortable.
 - a. Principal Condon confirmed that, to the best of his knowledge, there are no current investigations of current teachers.
 - b. Principal Condon expressed appreciation for the letter that the THAA sent to the Mayor and other officials.
 - c. Principal Condon described what he felt the mood of the student body was at this time; students' frustration with the Department of Education is at a high level.
 - d. PTA Representative Alysa O'Shea applauded the principal's updates and transparency and appreciated his coming to the PTA meeting.
- C. Principal Condon is hopeful about the personnel changes that emanated from the November election.
 - a. He attended an introductory meeting with Chancellor Banks and related that this chancellor promises to trust the schools and give them more autonomy and less bureaucracy with which contend.
 - b. He expressed optimism that the new administration will fund the Bridge Program, and noted that the current Superintendent and Deputy Superintendent are supportive.
- D. Parent/guardians still have significant concerns related to COVID.
 - a. Recent attendance was 83% whereas it is usually 97%. The absence of 20 teachers on one day made logistics difficult. COVID required the rescheduling of several athletic matches.
 - b. The school distributed 800 home COVID test kits
 - c. 93.8% of the students have been vaccinated and 100% of the adults in the building are vaccinated.
 - d. Many students have moved their club meetings to a remote format.
 - e. JodieLassoff, Class of 1991, is the new Parent Coordinator and has created a very helpful flow chart to assist parents in making decisions that they must make on a daily basis as the situation changes.
 - f. Ms. O'Shea again spoke for the PTA which is "impressed with [his] responses to COVID."
- E. Principal Condon thanked the Alumni Association for support of his actions and its awareness of his level of commitment to the school.

VI. Treasurer's Report. Treasurer Craig Slutzkin reported.

- A. Mr. Slutzkin reviewed the report, highlighting specific sources of funds and sources for specific awards.
- B. Significant expenses included professional development grants for the guidance department, funding to send the librarian to a relevant conference, the annual ad for the yearbook and the payment for Constant Contact.
- C. The required audit is almost complete, with no issues flagged thus far.
- D. Dues notices have been sent out electronically. A paper mailing will be forthcoming. A graphical notice was part of the December newsletter.

VII. Committee Reports

A. Events Committee Report.

1. Karen Curzio and Dr. Lee spoke about reunions and ongoing pandemic concerns.
 - a. The Board discussed timing and format of events.
 - b. Dr. Lee posted requests on Facebook and Instagram for volunteer reunion organizers, asking them to participate in discussions about the kinds of events that make sense.
 - c. Shari Gruber stated that the ZOOM reunion for her class was successful though it requires that one person speak at a time. There is some thought that older alums will want to wait for an in-person event. David Zarowin suggested hybrid events, commenting that it "required really highly motivated participants," the value of ZOOM games, and the possibility of a fundraising component using the creation of NFTs. Ben Fung stated he already owns the THHS NFT.
 - d. Ms. Curzio reminded us that DISCORD created a successful virtual event.
 - e. Dr. Lee, Ms. Curzio, and Mr. Zarowin will continue the discussion.
2. Mr. Slutzkin reported on the success of the on-line Magic Show.
 - a. 40 people participated including alumni and their children as well as grandchildren of teachers.
 - b. Many directors expressed the hope that we can do more events like this in the future, including a cooking demonstration, another museum tour, and a CAHOOT event which might be an event to appeal to teen-agers, both students and children of alums.
3. We still are holding off on making definitive plans for the annual meeting.

B. Do Better Together Committee Report. Craig Slutzkin and Selina Lee reported.

1. Craig Slutzkin and Selina Lee both expressed appreciation for the extraordinary work Director Jillissa Drayton consistently has done producing the monthly newsletter.
2. They noted the need to schedule a brainstorming event to continue progress in this direction.

VIII. PTA Report. Alysa O'Shea reported.

- A. Ms. O'Shea shared information about the PTA meeting that took place before this meeting. This information is documented in earlier reports.
- B. Ms O'Shea reviewed a tentative schedule for alumni speakers for future PTA meetings.

IX. Compliance. The report was deferred but work will be completed in 2022 as compliance requires. Craig Slutzkin and Lara Traum are finishing this work.

X. New Business. Craig Slutzkin reported that there are at least three Townsend Harris alums currently running for office: Nily Rozic, Ethan Felder, and Rana Abdelhamid. He reminded the Board that as a 501c3, the Alumni Association cannot make any endorsements or advertise any candidate nor are they supposed to speak at the school per DOE guidelines.

Craig Slutzkin closed the meeting. A motion to adjourn was made by Debbie Michlewitz, was seconded by Dr. Lee, and the motion was passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:32 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debra Michlewitz
Secretary