

**Townsend Harris Alumni Association, Inc.**

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors as approved on December 2, 2015  
September 29, 2015**

**Location: New Leaf Partners, 7 Times Square, New York, New York 10036**

The following directors were present and constituted a quorum: Jesse Ash, Anthony Barbetta, Jomaire A. Crawford, Tanya M. Odom, Selina W. Lee, Kimberly Lo, Lara Traum, Gary Mellow, Debra Michlewitz, Ethan Felder, Nily Rozic, Shari Gruber and Craig L. Slutzkin.

Also in attendance was Michael L. Rosen, Michael Benjamin, Gail Goldspiel, Elizabeth Sandik.

- I. Craig Slutzkin called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM and welcomed the directors. Members introduced themselves, shared some summer experiences, and resume details. Michael L. Rosen is our new PTA liaison.
- II. **Approval of Board Meeting Minutes.** The Board reviewed the minutes of the May 20, 2015 meeting. A motion to accept the minutes was made by Tanya Odom and seconded by Ethan Felder to approve the minutes. Motion passed unanimously.
- III. **2015 Jay Winston Scholarship Winner.** Tanya Odom took time to underscore "why we're here and what we do" by talking about this year's Jay Winston Scholarship winner this year. The recipient was a student who was homeless during his senior year, moving 9 times, including living in a homeless shelter with his mother and 2 siblings. He wrote in his application that the time of "unlimited high speed internet was gone...I had to take on many responsibilities...using a park's wifi hotspot...using my phone's limited data plan to do homework...there I felt normal...every other Saturday [going] to my aunt...to feel normal...[enduring] a dark and lonely situation...to become a more positive and resourceful person." The student is going to Northwestern University. The Board wants to offer ongoing support to this graduate and Craig Slutzkin contacted the student to tell him that we want provide ongoing help. The school's original alums also had challenging biographies and Townsend Harris High School made a difference in real ways for them.
- IV. **Executive Committee Report.** Craig Slutzkin reported the following activities that he, Selina Lee, and Tanya Odom have advanced.
  - A. **2015 Graduation.**
    1. Founders' Award was awarded posthumously to AP Malcolm Rossman.
    2. Scott Stringer, NYC's Comptroller, was the key note speaker, thanks to Craig Slutzkin diligence.
  - B. **Dues:** There are 400 paid members thus far, billed electronically. Paper requests now have been mailed.
  - C. **Videography:** The project to create a documentary record of old alums, Class of 1988 alums, original teachers of the re-opened school, being prepared by Jesse Ash, continues. The process is long, requiring donated funds and inventive planning to mitigate costs. Jesse Ash discounts his fees and donates his time and expertise but each session costs about \$2500 where 8 to10 interviews can be filmed. Small pieces have been shown at Founders Day. The project offers branding opportunities as a way to garner financial support.
  - D. **Administrators:** Selina Lee and Craig Slutzkin are trying to shift additional tasks, including entry of dues payment, to Gia Malka who has been doing administrative work successfully.
  - E. **Website:** Some improvements are needed to improve ease of access and submission of payments especially for women with married names. Additional content is posted

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such as the *In Memoriam* feature with 150 obituaries of prominent alums from the original and reopened schools, excerpts from videography project, and original files of Henry Shereff and Saul Grossman, past THAA presidents. We need and are looking for a webmaster.

- F. Scholarships: Vivek Shah, graduate of the class of 1990, has provided \$100,000 to provide a \$5000 per year award at graduation. First award was made this past June. Mr. Shah was impressed with the school's level of diligence in providing the candidate. We'd like to inspire some competitive spirit to get other classes' alums to contribute. Vivek had spoken at graduation and that sparked this. We fielded some ideas to garner the same kind of commitment such as profiling alums in the *Classic*.

**V. Events Committee Report**

- A. 2005 Reunion Event organized by Jomaire Crawford with help from Ethan Felder at Pranna was a great success. 80-90 alums attended, and the event made \$1000. Planners connected with alums to determine acceptable price and venue using the class's Facebook page. People were individually messaged. There is now interest in brunches and happy hours. Other goals, such as sponsoring a scholarship, were envisioned.
- B. Gary Mellow is working on 25 year reunion set for Thanksgiving Weekend on 11/28 at Hurley's in Theater District. He asked the board about developing a database to archive the nuts and bolts information to help future planners, building on work done by Vincent Yuen. Danielle Steinman and Ruth Lerman are working with Mr. Mellow.
- C. 2006 Reunion is in the planning stage. Planners Kimberly Lo and Lara Traum echoed the need to proactively maintain a class-wide network of connections so that attendance of events can be successful. Gail Goldspeil spoke about programs at Bank Street and Brandeis that seem to do this where recent grads connect with new students.
- D. School Calendar noting events was distributed for review.
- E. Other PENDING EVENTS:
1. Annual Meeting may be combined with Sing to get better attendance. In the past we've gotten better attendance when the meeting was paired with a museum tour.
  2. There are the possibilities of a philanthropy event, education event, and / or service event working in the mold of the successful past legal events and Lean-in panel.

- V. Membership Outreach Committee is moving forward to be chaired by Shari Gruber.

**VII. Treasurer's Report**

- A. Mr. Slutzkin presented the financial report for the period between September 1, 2014 and August 31, 2015. Report, budget, and fund allocations were reviewed.
- B. Questions about the Innovative Programs and 2015 –2016 Budget for School Activities lines were fielded and discussed. Board unanimously approved the Budget.
- C. A motion to accept was made by Jesse Ash and seconded by Nily Rozic and passed unanimously.

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- VIII. **School Report.** Principal Barbetta updated the board about news and developments.
- A. Townsend Harris HS has been ranked #1 by the NY Post, #35 by US News and World Report and #6 by Beating the Odds. We have 12 semi-finalists for National Merit Scholarship Competition outpacing other schools in the region. NPR interviewed various students at the HS Fair who loudly declared that they only wanted to go to Townsend Harris.
  - B. Our new superintendent is Elaine Lindsay who is also the Bronx Superintendent and now a piece of Queens. We are no longer grouped with the Specialized High Schools. Various enrollment issues still present problems.
  - C. Principal received an email from the author of Bright Boys offering us her notes used in the writing of that book about THHS.
  - D. New Athletic Director is Lauren Caiaccia and the new Principal's Secretary is Susan Rodriguez.
- IX. **PTA Report.** Michael L. Rosen reported the following.
- A. PTA is grateful for the Alumni Association's work.
  - B. PTA will again try to raise \$60,000 through the Phonathon and new SAT / ACT Prep Program using in-house teachers, Ms. Brandeis, Ms. Liu, Ms. Widman, and Ms. Stillman, to teach the classes. "Outside" students will also be allowed to enroll. Program may run 2 or 3 times a year.
  - C. PTA seeks to build community and find new partners for their work. It is also committed to connecting students to alumni as a good idea for students and a good investment in students becoming active alums.
  - D. PTA published the Parent Handbook, hosted a successful Freshman Breakfst, and saw a well-attended first PTA meeting. The PTA published the THHS brochure that was distributed at the HS Fair.
  - E. PTA enthusiastically recognizes on-going improvements in the guidance department. There is a new F-Status guidance counselor, Mr. Wang and guidance counselors attended a conference in California.
  - F. The new Co-Presidents are Ms. Liz Sandik and Dr. Penny Stern.
- X. **Feedback from new attendees.** Gail Goldspeil and Michael Benjamin gave the board a fresh look at issues that we discussed.
- XI. **By-Laws:** Craig Slutzkin invited participation in the review and revision of the by-laws.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:38 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Debra Michlewitz  
Acting Secretary of the Meeting