

**Townsend Harris Alumni Association, Inc.**

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors as approved on March 22, 2016**

**January 26, 2016**

**Location: High Line Hotel, 180 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue, New York, New York 10011**

The following directors were present and constituted a quorum: Selina Lee, Anthony Barbetta, Lara Traum, Jomaire A. Crawford, Debra Michlewitz, Ethan Felder, Jesse Ash

Also in attendance was Michael L. Rosen, Michael Benjamin, Vincent Yuen, Franco Scardino, Benny Fung, Rebecca Lynch, Amita Rau, Yelena Dzhanova

- I. Selina Lee called the meeting to order at 6:40 PM and welcomed the directors and other attendees. We have a new earlier start time and hope to end business at a proportionately earlier time. Next meetings are scheduled for Tuesday, March 22 and Wednesday, May 18.
- II. Greetings were shared around the table: What was the best thing you did when you were snowed in? We heard about the joys of shoveling with the help of kids, skiing in the city, sleeping in, movie going, cooking, snowshoeing, sleigh riding, burning firewood for nine hours, cat cuddling, and singing a gig.
- III. **Approval of Board Meeting Minutes.** The Board reviewed the minutes of the December 2, 2015 meeting. A motion to accept the minutes was made by Ethan Felder and seconded by Lara Traum. Motion passed unanimously.
- IV. **Executive Committee Report.** Selina Lee reported the following activities. Craig Slutzkin was not present because he is a new father and in California bonding with Andrew Hunter Slutzkin. We all send enthusiastic best wishes.
  - A. The 2015 dues cycle started with 732 dues payments, exceeding the 2014 cycle but less than 2013 cycle which was our highest.
  - B. The holidays prevented the taping of any new video interviews. The project continues.
  - C. Ethan Felder will present ideas to promote our Mentoring mission.
  - D. Craig emailed our new electronic newsletter. It is a revised version of a past format to update alums quarterly. The next one will appear at the end of February. Last issue included information about dues, reunions, video project, Founders' Day and class notes culled from notes people attach to their dues payment.
- V. **School Relations Reports,** presented by Principal Barbetta.
  - A. Science Olympiad team placed third in NYS, our highest finish. On 2/2 the team will defend their city championship title.
  - B. Robotics team is doing a fundraising \$10 breakfast event at Applebee's. Regional competition is coming up.
  - C. Mr. Hackney coordinated the SS Honor Society induction for 60 inductees.
  - D. The Principal is attending the Jack Kemp Cook Foundation event in Washington D.C. We were invited with 10 other NYC schools. The foundation provides scholarships for financially needy, academically successful students. We have eligible students.
  - E. Special student trips abroad are in the offing. Groups will visit China in the spring and Japan in the summer including a visit to our sister school.
  - F. Mr. Scardino will be escorting an enthusiastic group of students, selected by lottery, to visit the President's Situation Room in the White House. Trip has been arranged by our alumnus Jason Novick who works for the administration.

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- G. We are still working on the renewal of the Queens College Grant proposal. It should be finalized early in March. Negotiations continue.
- H. The multi-day Festival of Nations performances take place at the end of February.
- I. We received about 6000 applications for our 2016 Freshman Class. This exceeds the record of about 5000 last year. Acceptances go out early March. Our budget allocation can be affected if we fall short of 280 acceptances.
- J. At the State of the Borough Address, Borough President Melinda Katz acknowledged Principal Barbetta and THHS because of our high rank in national magazine rankings of High Schools of Excellence.
- K. We may be funded at a higher rate next year. We've been funded at a level of 92.5%. Large schools are funded at the level of 90%. The Principals' Association has filed complaint about this underfunding practice. Some small schools are funded at over 100%
- L. This year, our students already have received good college acceptances through early decision applications.

**VI. PTA Report, presented by Michael Rosen**

- A. Future alums and their participation in the alumni association and the THHS community continue to be a focus of the PTA.
  - 1. The Alumni sign-in sheet at the security desk at any event, specifically Career Day, could be a source for possible alumni association participants.
  - 2. An Alumni Scavenger Hunt, where we find them, could energize alums to participate more actively.
  - 3. PTA and other constituents talked about organizing a Future Alumni Club exploring how to become an alum and making clear the extent of possible engagement. We heard many ideas including a Coupon Book and an Outward Bound strategy.
  - 4. Mr. Scardino suggested that there be an elected SU position for a senior or a senior and junior to attend Board meetings as a way to engage students in the Alumni Association before graduation. These students could report to the Student Senate or Senior Meeting. Contacting Ms. Oberlander, the current COSA, a THHS alum, is a next step.
- B. There have been 2 PTA meetings each with outside speakers to spark attendance. One spoke about Teenage Driving and the other spoke about the Macaulay Honors program.
- C. PTA sponsored a luncheon for the THHS staff which was funded personally by a PTA officer.
- D. Similarly a fundraising notice was funded personally by a PTA officer.
- E. The PTA is concerned about the Queens College grant and recognizes the value of the Principal's personal strengths, contacts, and efforts in this matter.
- F. Fundraising continues to be a challenge with more difficulties than last year. There are economic and cultural barriers.

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- G. The Phonathon initially raised \$28,660, far short of our \$50,000 goal. \$29,360 filtered in by January 10, 2016. PTA secured permission to stage a 2<sup>nd</sup> round Phonathon. Members attended another Fundraising Workshop at the Borough President's office.
- H. The sponsorship of an in-house SAT class as an eventual source of revenue is the kind of activity that the PTA is happy to pursue.
- I. March 11 is THHS Career Day. It is a great opportunity for alums to reconnect and foster future connections. Contact Veronica York if you'd like to participate. Michael Rosen will present on entrepreneurship.
- J. PTA expresses appreciation for Tanya Odem's and Craig Slutzkin's service
- K. All teachers contributed to the PTA this year. This is reasonable because the PTA funds the school's activities in many ways.

**VII. Mentorship Committee Report**

- A. Committee members are Ethan Felder, Michael Benjamin, and Franco Scardino.
- B. Various Mentoring Programs to engage graduates in the Alumni Association were suggested. These will demonstrate that the Alumni Association is relevant to their lives after THHS.
  - 1. One idea focused on fostering, nurturing, and suggesting employment opportunities for students. CAREER Day is the current best example.
  - 2. To go further, the committee talked about the creation of an online platform to connect and interact with students and alums for summer internships, job opportunities, and mentorship. The Alumni Association would create a list only open to current THHS students and to dues paying alumni association members.
    - a. The idea is to go beyond "speed mentoring."
    - b. Various platforms were discussed: Facebook, Linked-In, et al.
    - c. Issues of a webmaster, password access after dues payment, use of our current website were discussed.

**VIII. Events Committee**

- A. Vincent Yuen reported about upcoming events and factors that seem to affect the success of events.
  - 1. Medical event, set for 2/16/16, hosted by Dr Reiter at his office on the Upper Eastside will engage alums from various Health Care professions and deal with a variety of issues including how to build a practice. This follows the success of the event last year.
  - 2. 2006 reunion is coming up and Lara Traum said that 150 alums currently express interest. Next November is the target date.
- B. Vincent reviewed a handful of points with some assorted information provided by others. Some events and dates have a history of success. Thanksgiving Weekend has been a good time. People prefer reunions tied to one year but it's difficult to get the numbers to show up so that we realistically can book a venue. We're skipping Lunar New Year this year because it's too close to the Medical Event. Brooklyn Cyclone outings are successful. Lean-In was hugely successful and part 2 is in the planning

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stage. Gail Gospiel is working with Tanya Odom on the 2nd Annual iteration. Let Selina Lee know if you want to help organize the 3/8 International Woman's Day event.

**IX. Young Alumni Committee Report**

- A. Kimberly Lo is working on two events: a Volunteer event and a Bowling Event
- B. A new thought is the creation of a College senior event to reconnect THHS alums four years after they graduated from high school when they may be ready to "come home."  
It seems like an effective moment to reconnect.

**X. Fundraising and Development Committee Report Deferred**

**XI. Membership Committee Report Deferred**

**XII. Treasurer's Report**

- A. Selina Lee reviewed the written report submitted by Craig Slutzkin, noting investments, other receipts, expenditures, and resultant surplus funds.
- B. Historically, we have met in Craig's office. Going forward, we will be using new spaces for meetings which may be an added expenditure unless someone else can offer us space.

**XIII.** No Old Business needed attention.

**XIV. New Business: Social Media Committee Chaired by Jesse Ash**

- A. A general discussion of the association's social media history and review of possibilities took place. The effectiveness of various platforms for different parts of our constituency was questioned and analyzed.
- B. A new suggestion, in keeping with our goal to engage more grads as active members in the alumni association, was introduced. Someone could tweet a Day in the Life of a lawyer or other professional or a senior at the high school could be an ambassador to let us know about life at the high school.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:55

Respectfully Submitted,  
Debra Michlewitz  
Secretary