

Townsend Harris Alumni Association, Inc.

Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors (as approved on May 18, 2016)

March 22, 2016

Location: 1000 Avenue of Americas, Suite 400, New York, New York 10018

The following directors were present and constituted a quorum: Selina Lee, Dr. Largmann, Principal Anthony Barbetta, Craig L. Slutzkin, Kimberly Lo, Gary Mellow, Debra Michlewitz, Jesse Ash, Michael L. Rosen, Benny Fung

Also in attendance were Vincent Yuen, Michael Byc, Franco Scardino –UFT Observer, Amita Rao.

- I. Selina Lee called the meeting to order at 6:42 PM and welcomed the directors and other attendees.
- II. **Approval of Board Meeting Minutes.** The Board reviewed the minutes of the January 26, 2016 meeting. A motion to accept the minutes was made by Vincent Yuen and seconded by Michael Rosen to approve the minutes with edits by Craig Slutzkin. Motion passed unanimously.
- III. To open our meeting, attendees shared dreams of hobbies long deferred. The list ranged from “acting” to “welding.”
- IV. **Executive Committee Report.** Selina Lee reported the following activities.
 - A. **The 2015 dues cycle** now has 736 dues payments, exceeding the 2014 cycle but less than the 2013 cycle which had been our highest in several years. Since the November 30th Treasurer’s Report an additional \$1486 has been collected. Shari, Ben, and Selina continue to discuss the dues cycle and how to tie the membership committee goals.
 - B. **Video Project** is on pause. We still need to tape some key people including the original librarian Valerie Billy. We will resume the scheduling upon Craig Slutzkin’s return.
 - C. **The Committee seeking to Develop a Mentoring Program,** Ethan Felder, Selina Lee, and Craig Slutzkin, continues to consider the website as a forum to connect students to alumni via intern or job postings. As we move forward, our privacy policy needs to be revisited. Contact data needs to be verified and corrected. It was noted that people update email addresses more reliably than phone numbers. Web will provide email addresses not phone numbers but Gary Mellow suggested an option for alumni to indicate a preferred method of contact. The current networking tab does provide some of this demographic information but there are some problems in data consistency, such as using one established term instead of “lawyer,” “legal,” or “law.” Ethan suggested spearheading some data management. Craig noted that some hybrid professions present more challenges in classification and suggested that the website provide headings that will govern people’s self-identifications. Note the checkboxes that are on the website currently.

- D. **The Electronic Newsletter** should be coming out quarterly and the next newsletter is on track to go out in early April.
- E. The search is on for the **2016 Commencement Speaker**. As a departure from the business people and politicians who have spoken in the past, Craig has approached the music producer for Sesame Street, Christopher Cerf, son of Bennett Cerf, a founder of Random House and a panelist on What's My Line, a game show during the 50s and 60s and a graduate of THHS. The idea of approaching other grown children of successful alums seems like a promising strategy for the future.
- F. Our next board meeting will be Wednesday, May 18.

V. Principal's School Report. Principal Barbetta reported.

- A. Principal Barbetta opened his School Report by sharing the Spring 2016 Principal's Newsletter which lists many of the accolades and awards that THHS students have won. Competitions that are highlighted are Science Olympiad, Robotics, Latin Certamens, Japanese Speaking Contest, and National History Day. Programs that are providing rich experiences for our students include *Classic*, *Phoenix*, *Social Science Research*, *Festival of Nations*.
- B. The principal attended a program at the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation. The foundation awards scholarships to low income, high achieving students. The current executive director is Harold Levy, the former NYC Schools Chancellor, who knows that excellent candidates for the foundation's support attend THHS.
- C. The principal spoke about issues related to the recruitment of our next freshman class. THHS received a record 6000 applications. He receives a live feed daily showing acceptances. 150 accepted students are still undecided. There was less competition when the school was first reopened. Now there is competition from LaGuardia HS, the specialized high schools, and other Queens high schools with attractive possibilities. The 2nd open house was very well attended; however, we may not do as well as last year which was a particularly successful application year. There is a 75% attrition of the outer borough, private school, and specialized high school applicants. Parents often have a fixation on the special HS label. The principal considers these factors as he makes acceptances. He can only rank about 500 students and the attrition affects the size of the freshman class.
- D. Phoenix organized an impressive Poetry Event at Barnes and Noble in Manhattan.
- E. Queens College Grant awaits approval and renewal. The process is in its final stages. It will be approximately a \$1million budget to be in part shared with Queens College.
- F. Students from our Japanese program are going to Japan this summer and will visit our sister school in Japan. Ms Sato-Berger is planning this. The program is a perennial participant in the Japan Speaking Contest ...see newsletter
- G. There is a long list in the Newsletter, including the Harvard Certamens competition, of contests in which our students have participated. There is a long list of wins and distinctive achievements.
- H. Principal thanked THAA and the alumni for participation in the Career Day program. Unfortunately, best laid plans were under cut by some last minute calls from presenters who were too sick to attend.

- I. This year 25 students were semi-finalists, 8 were finalists, and 1, Jonathan Lee, was a winner in the National Merit Scholarship competition.
- J. Ms. York is out on child care leave but is constantly in touch.
- K. 13 new special ed students will be attending THHS in the Fall. The principal is not ranking anyone from the special ed pool in round 2 because none of these students is qualified to successfully experience the THHS course of study. We did not meet the DOE's goal of 45 acceptances. We will have additional funding for another teacher in math or science to help struggling special ed students
- L. Various statistics demonstrate that THHS is on par with Stuyvesant.

VI. PTA Liaison Michael Rosen presented the PTA Report.

- A. The last PTA meeting, on 3/17, was well attended by 38 parents. The next meeting will be 4/24. Programs, like ones informing parents about teen driving and nutrition, are designed to attract attendees.
- B. The PTA Executive Board works with the well-being of the school always in mind. At the meeting, they stress to new parents that winning admission to THHS is akin to winning the lottery. The PTA views feedback from the students as valuable information about the school and the well-being of the school.
- C. The PTA sponsored the Principal's Breakfast for the new members of the school community.
- D. FUND RAISING efforts continue. \$500 in branded merchandise was sold at the Open House. Mr. Rosen displayed a THHS "I Was Accepted" folder. Branded merchandise is an idea to build upon for its fundraising potential and its ability to connect with students. Currently the PTA has raised \$38000 on route to their fundraising goal of \$55000.
- E. Mr. Rosen provided the PTA's overview and review of the events and activities noting that these activities dovetail with the PTA's strategies of creating community. He noted Phoenix's expanding formats, a Student/Teacher Fear Factor event, Festival of Nations, Career Day, where he presented on entrepreneurship, the Robotics Team special accomplishment as a team known for its helpfulness to other teams, the End of Year Portfolio Humanities Department Brag Book, the PTA sponsored SAT PREP.
- F. PTA is strongly invested in connecting students to alumni and the alumni association. A Future Alumni Club, with Principal Barbetta as advisor, is in the offing. The lobby list, recording alumni who visit, is being eyed as an important source to connect with alumni.

VII. Mentoring Committee Report. Selina Lee presented briefly for Ethan Felder. There's ongoing thinking about using and improving the website to help make mentoring connections.

VIII. Events Committee Report. Vincent Yuen presented.

- A. Completed events include the successful Medical Professionals Networking Event at Dr. Lee Reiter's office on 2/16 and a Lunar New Year event on March 12.
- B. On tap are the Legal Professionals Mixer on May 4, the Class of 1991 Reunion on June 4, and a rescheduled Lean In, Part 2. Playwrights Tavern is a good venue for this type of event because it doesn't demand a minimum.

- C. Currently various alums are working with Vincent to organize the 1991 Reunion. There are volunteers focused on the 2011 Reunion which is scheduled for July 24. More volunteers are encouraged to get involved. The planning for the 2001 Reunion has begun. Bennie Fung, Class of 1996, will get planning started for the 1996 Reunion.
- D. The Events Committee Report listed dates for the FIRST Robotics Competition, school play, SLT Meetings, Spring Concert, Baccalaureate, and Commencement.
- E. The Cyclones solicited our creating an event, giving us advance notice of some of their theme nights. There is interest in planning this activity. There's a Star Wars night.

IX. Young Alumni Committee Report. Kimberly Lo reported on the ideas which she and Lara Traum have considered .

- A. They are carefully considering substituting a list of events in addition to, or instead of, a Kick-off Event. They are targeting June, July, and August with scheduled events.
 - 1. A first volunteer event will take place at the Queens Botanical Garden on June 5, its Volunteer Day.
 - 2. For the next activity, we may partner with the Coalition for the Homeless in their Back to School initiative in August. We would help assemble together Back to School kits for students
 - 3. They suggest we connect to a Green Market's recycling events.
- B. Alums ask for family friendly events and weekend events.
- C. A discussion of other possibilities ensued. Connecting to the school and reaching out to Sara Oberlander at school, the Archon advisor, an idea fielded at an earlier meeting, was reiterated. The Recycling Event is a natural connection to SPE. Other ideas that have been suggested were social events like hiking and kayaking, and Yankee and Mets games, perhaps the Subway Series.
- D. For the Fall, we heard about a tour of Green-wood Cemetery, a visit to the Tenement Museum, perhaps tied to an educator's event, a brewery event, keeping in mind that serving alcohol excludes some alums, and a tour of Flushing Meadow, led by Michael Byc. Michael Rosen suggested a secondary graduating class gift tied to an alumni activity.

X. Fundraising and Development Committee Report: Postponed

XI. Membership Committee: Selina Lee reported on a conference call with Ben Fung and Shari Gruber

- A. The question is always, "How can we reach a broader scope of people?"
- B. Ideas include an alumni connection to Plum, discount theater tickets / TKTs, school events, creating a basket of discounts, and a more vigorous announcement of those opportunities on our website. Currently there is an alumni discount for ZipCar and Kaplan Services.
- C. Other new ideas generated at the meeting included possibly extending a student's THHS email address past graduation, class wars for best membership numbers with prizes like an ongoing trophy, a THAA sponsored event, or a logo item.
- D. This led to the collateral issue of increasing our income. An increase in annual membership dues seemed reasonable, as well as the institution of a one time, lifetime

dues rate paired with a commemorative seat plaque in the auditorium. These ideas will be relayed to the Fundraising Committee.

XII. Treasurer's Report: Postponed

XIII. Old Business

- A. The idea of a Rep Tie was again fielded.
- B. The idea of a UFT Position on the Board was reintroduced.
- C. The idea of a THHS student with a specified elected SU office, who will attend some or all THAA board meetings, was again suggested. This dovetails with the reinstatement of a designated class rep from the graduating class serving on the THAA board or attending THAA meetings. The student should have the intention to attend a local college.
- D. To continue the theme of creating stronger TH community ties, it was suggested that we try to create after-event gatherings, inviting faculty, staff, and alums. This year's Commencement schedule would make it easy to arrange that kind of gathering.
- E. THAA can introduce themselves to new faculty by offering financial support for supplies.

Respectfully submitted,

Debra Michlewitz

Secretary