

**Townsend Harris Alumni Association, Inc.**

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors (as approved on March 22, 2017)**

**January 24, 2017**

**Location: New Leaf Venture Partners, 7 Times Square, Suite 3502, New York, New York 10036**

The following directors were present and constituted a quorum: Jesse Ash, Michael Byc, Karen Curzio (by phone), Ethan Felder, Shari Gruber, Malcolm G. Largmann, Selina Lee, Kimberly Lo, Gary Mellow, Debra Michlewitz, Michael Rosen, Nily Rozic, Craig L. Slutzkin, Lara Traum (by phone), Aquib Yacoob.

Guests: Principal Rosemarie Jahoda (by phone at 8:00P.M.), Franco Scardino and David Zarowin (by phone).

- I. Co-President Selina Lee called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM and welcomed the directors and other attendees. Happy New Year to everyone.
- II. **Approval of Board Meeting Minutes.** The Board reviewed the minutes of the November 30, 2016 meeting. A motion to accept the minutes was made by Kimberly Lo and seconded by Aquib Yacoob. The motion to approve the minutes passed unanimously.
- III. **Executive Committee Report.** Dr. Lee reported the following activities and led several discussions.
  - A. **Mentoring Committee Report.** Ethan Felder, the chair of this committee, led this part of meeting. He has been working with Gary Mellow and they are drafting a short survey to recruit alums to mentoring and find out what kind of mentorship each respondent envisions. In addition, the survey collects information about occupations and interests. It looks promising and it's just about ready to send it out. The committee will be able to go forward after assessing wants of the alumni community.
    1. The current initiative takes the current student body into account and will adjust specifics as new issues and perspectives become apparent. We are in the first draft stage considering only email and phone contacts. There are questions about in-person meetings between alums and current HS students.
    2. Career Day again was suggested as a good day to collect information from visiting and presenting alumni. Alums in that moment are people who are receptive to connecting with HS students.
    3. Assorted questions and ideas were posed. Do we vet and interview alums who want to be mentors? Should we offer some training to assuage parents? Michael Byc asked these questions based upon programs he has seen in action at the Parks Department. He advised that "you need to do training." Gary Mellow commented that perhaps face-to-face meetings are not advisable for HS students and alums. Maybe we should call it a Pen Pal Program. A Mentor Fair, perhaps as an extension of Career Day, might offer a good forum. We need to determine if there is a desire among the alumni to do this. Going beyond the meeting, the discussion led to concerns about the scope of the mentoring. We want to avoid the discussions becoming therapy sessions; therefore, we'll have to design and provide clear guidelines. Does the conversation go beyond career? It was thought that the conversation might go beyond career but career is primary for this program.

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4. Another issue is making sure that our newest alums stay in college, particularly “first generation” college students. The ideas of Mentor Wish Lists / Mentee Wish Lists might allow for better matches of Mentor and Mentee. An alumnus might state that “I can do college counseling not career counseling....” These variables are in the survey which is the subject that jump started tonight’s discussion.
- B. Principal’s Search.** The current status was presented by Selina Lee and Craig Slutzkin. The chancellor will restart the process with a February 1<sup>st</sup> posting. Although there had been an early indication that the C30 Committee would be allowed to vet resumes and application and advise on the choice of candidates for the Level 1 Interview, that was reversed. The first set of candidates for the interrupted level 1 can reapply.
1. A job description of the position of THHS principal, written by David Herszenhorn, was distributed. It includes the practical skills and the pedagogical philosophy that are part of our culture. It was written for an earlier principal search. It can be shared. It was sent to Superintendent Elaine Lindsay. It will be posted on the Alumni Facebook page. It was suggested that the text be presented with text boxes to highlight key quotations and ideas.
  2. THAA can search and recruit candidates. We informed the chancellor that we would reach out. Advise people to let Alumni Association know if they are applying so that there is some check on the DOE’s elimination of qualified candidates. We would keep information confidential.
  3. Previously, qualified people might have hesitated to apply because they assumed that the IA gets the job. People understand that’s not the case this time.
- C. Dues Report.** Shari Gruber and Craig Slutzkin reported. The committee could not launch the December dues drive. The drive will get back in gear in the next two weeks. See page 8 of the Board Packet for current paid dues numbers by graduating class.
- D. Committee Structure.** Selina Lee led a discussion. See page 18 of the Board Packet to see the current committees, open positions on committees, and members currently serving. We can combine committees where that makes sense.

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1. Most pressing is we need to replace Vincent Yuen on the Events Committee. Karen Curzio said that she might, after talking with Vincent, assume Vincent's job. He did a lot. Vincent organized trips to sports events. He designed and tried new kinds of events. Vincent advised organizers of reunions. He recruited alums to organize reunions. He facilitated the organizing of the reunions, often manning the door. Perhaps Vincent can be approached to create a packet organizing his accumulated Events Knowledge that would be helpful to planners in the future. We're interested in his notes about venues, pricing, and assorted ideas. In the past he perennially spearheaded the legal and finance profession networking events. Going forward perhaps we can build on this portfolio of events, adding our nascent mentoring events and new sporting events. This committee might be folded into the Mentoring Committee and Young Alums Committee. This committee structure is fluid. We have people with experience in various fields, specifically the event planning field, such as Aquib Yacoob. Aquib acknowledged his experience in organizing.
  2. We heard about some recruiting efforts, specifically for the Social Media Committee. Kimberly Lo and Lara Traum tried to recruit alums with a survey after their reunion. The most pressing problem is consolidating, updating, redesigning, and coordinating the THAA's various social media accounts. The goal is to more effectively communicate with our community and foster engagement in larger numbers. An Instagram account maintained by a THHS alum, FoodBabyNY, provides some food for thought. It's an idea that we might be able to co-opt. Always there are questions with any initiative. Would it be a valuable avenue to connect with our alums? Will people use it? Will we get people to post and maintain it? Selina Lee, Michael Byc, Jesse Ash, Kim Lo, Aquib Yacoob, Lara Traum, and David Zarowin will have a conference call to discuss.
- E. **The Calendar.** Various dates need to be corrected on the calendar. A corrected calendar will be distributed via email.
- F. **Special Efforts of the Board of Directors.** Co- President Craig Slutzkin thanked Selina Lee for her tireless and ongoing work with Franco Scardino to make sure that the selection of a new principal best serves the needs of THHS. She's been involved on multiple levels and many ways including making press kits, emailing people both in our community and in political positions, and coordinating efforts. We all applauded. Dr. Largmann commended Craig and Selina for their commitment of energy and intelligence in dealing with the current situation. All concurred. Craig called it a team effort, noting the ongoing efforts of Lara Traum, Ethan Felder and Kimberly Lo. Ethan noted Franco Scardino's role and unwavering moral stamina in standing up for the traditions of THHS.
1. Franco Scardino spoke about morale at the school, comparing it to a level of Soviet paranoia. Teachers have to leave the building to have a conversation. People are very concerned.

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2. Special Education Issues almost seem to be pushed to a back burner. There are some immediate questions. If we don't get the enrollment numbers we need, will we get 40 unqualified, unvetted special education students? Can we and should we broach the special education question with IA Principal Jahoda? Ms. Jahoda, saying that a replacement has not been found, has not released Special Ed teacher Ms Brandeis.

IV. **Events Committee Report.** Page 9 in the Board Packet lists completed, planned and pending events. On tap are an upcoming PTA meeting, a rescheduled 3-on-3 Basketball Event, which was cancelled due to inclement weather, a Phoenix Reading, an SLT meeting, and the Festival of Nations. A flyer announcing the PTA meeting will be distributed. THAA provided hospitality for the SLT Meeting. Kimberly Lo advised us that the Bowling Event is on hold.

V. **Principal's School Report.** **Principal Jahoda reported by phone.**

- A. "Great things are happening at school" including "an amazing Winter Concert." Students safely returned from the senior trip with strong reviews. There's been a successful Blood Drive. There was a successful kick-off Robotics Team fundraiser at a restaurant. Friends, family, and neighbors attended.
- B. In terms of the admissions process, "we're doing well." This year's Open House was a "success" with the "highest numbers since 2006." 6220 people visited which was a 15% increase. Craig Slutzkin asked about outreach to attract qualified Special Ed students and the demands of the DOE this year. IA Principal Jahoda said that the [DOE] numbers don't change. With "my efforts, we increased" our ranked special education students to "136 from last year's 95." When asked about the qualifications of these students, Ms. Jahoda responded that this is the "strongest pool we've ever had." In terms of specific efforts to attract qualified students, Ms. Jahoda attended superintendent meetings to urge middle school principals and counselors "to have their qualified students apply." When asked if the DOE will ask us to take more if more students apply, and Ms. Jahoda replied again that the numbers don't change and "we," Ms. Jahoda and Ms. York, "were able to rate a good number who will be a good fit." When asked what the number was, Ms. Jahoda said it would be "a full class. It's better to choose."
- C. It's now Regents Week and some class finals are also being taken. It's "going smoothly."
- D. Based on some communication from the PTA, the board asked about action being taken in response to a staff member's inappropriate personal business activities in school. Ms. Jahoda said that "she could not comment."
- E. Ethan Felder addressed "the elephant in the room." He asked the IA Principal about the atmosphere at the school and her leadership, specifically asking "What are you doing to address this situation? and "Are you cognizant of the problematic situation?" The IA Principal said that "I continue to do my job...to serve students... to act in the best interest of students. People's feelings are not my concern."

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- F. Kimberly Lo focused a question on Special Ed asking about the replacement of Gerogia Brandeis, wondering what will happen. The IA Principal stated that Ms. Brandeis had been promoted and that Ms York was working hard to find a replacement.
- G. Michael Rosen asked for an update on the School Budget. The IA Principal said “our budget person is in contact and I will meet with him in the next couple of weeks.
- H. Craig Slutzkin concluded by commenting that he understands Ms. Jahoda’s need to not disclose information but “I’m surprised” and “disheartened” that in the matter of the staff member’s behavior, thought to be a safety agent’s behavior, that she hasn’t provided any assurances that a situation is being addressed or how it is being addressed. He said, “We’ve had a much more open relationship with the principal in the past. Ms. Jahoda responded, “I understand legally what I’m allowed and not allowed to discuss.”

**VI. Young Alumni Events.**

- A. The “video is in the works.”
- B. Kimberly Lo attended and facilitated a Phoenix meeting. Another THHS / Phoenix alum, Allanna will do the same when she’s in the city.

**VII. PTA Report.** PTA Liaison Michael Rosen presented.

- A. Parents want this C30 saga to end. It distracts from the PTA’s constructive forward-looking work. The PTA thanks the THAA for its active support and involvement during this specific crisis.
- B. An important question is “Can we take advantage of the increased engagement due to this crisis and hold onto newly active parents going forward?”
- C. PTA would like to sponsor a dinner or event to look forward and create a business planning session to foster a joint PTA / THAA executive planning for future endeavors and projects..
- D. Last two PTA meetings were very productive, especially the December 15, as well as the January meeting. The PTA is energized.
- E. Financially PTA has met 42% of their fund raising goals. There will be another round of fund raising calls. PTA sent a Season’s Greetings message to solicit donations. The only big donations were “seat naming” donations, garnering \$1000 for each of two seats. PTA has not received requested information from the school to aid the fundraising efforts. The PTA does not want to have to do any budget cutting as it had to last year when fundraising goals were not reached.

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- F. PTA Leadership has been active in various citywide initiatives, attending PEP meetings and other venues. Liz Sadik is leaving while her son does a special internship outside of THHS. She's been a great asset and hopefully she'll be back. We have a new Co-President, Edward Tan, who is a former PTA President at Bayside HS. He is a freshman parent. This dovetails with our recruitment of underclassman parents. We hope that getting parents involved when their children enter the school will create greater continuity in our PTA leadership and programs.
  - G. Some dates were reviewed. January 9 was the Arista Induction; the Principal's Breakfast is scheduled for March 1; Career Day will be March 22.
  - H. Alumni Welcome policy confusion conflates with the PTA's recommendation that we use alumni sign-in sheets to gather good leads to contact alumni who are willing to engage with students in various ways. We are still trying to get the sign-in sheets.
- VIII. **Treasurer's Report.** Craig Slutzkin presented the financial report for the period ending December 31, 2016.
- A. Treasurer Slutzkin reviewed the report which appears on pages 10-17 in the board packet. A list of assets, receipts, and expenditures appears on page 11. Recently expenditures sponsored faculty development, STEM membership, and catering for the annual meeting and covered website development and maintenance and bank fees.
  - B. Total assets amount to about \$2,329,006.
  - C. Staff hasn't made requests for funds. Teachers' requests should come through the principal and APs. The current situation may interrupt that chain. Ms Jahoda has made a couple of requests but we don't see what she rejected. Recently there have been no big requests. Sue Brustein has made contact to apprise us of activities and needs for her department and teams. Perhaps a new gateways needs to be considered.
  - D. Sometimes we get feedback from teachers whose PD we have funded. There should always be written feedback from a sponsored teacher.
  - E. We discussed SMILE AMAZON. It takes enormous expense to generate small THHS / THAA donations.
  - F. Perhaps we need to do a year-end tax deduction appeal the way that many not-for-profits do.

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**X. New Business**

- A. Hall of Fame Extension and Footnote will be mounted.
- B. Again, we considered “Where do we put the faces of the new members of the Hall of Fame, Heather Nash and David Herszenhorn?” We need to get in touch with Mr. Morales who designed and constructed the extant display.
- C. Other ideas for the display were floated. Some ideas were an ongoing digital display which can be easily updated and revised. Another thought was a wall display that would be fleshed out with historic photos until there are more inductees. This project could be tied to a Founders Day project.
- D. Selina is active on Facebook and shared some very happy news which she discovered. Kimberly Lo has become engaged. Jesse Ash has become engaged. There were congratulations and applause.

Motion to adjourn was made by Kimberly Lo and seconded by Debra Michlewitz. Meeting adjourned at 9:07 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debra Michlewitz  
Secretary