

Townsend Harris Alumni Association, Inc.

Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors (as approved on November 8, 2017)

September 19th, 2017

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

The following directors were present and constituted a quorum: Jesse Ash, Michael Byc, Brian Condon, Karen Curzio, Ethan Felder (by phone), Ben Fung, Shari Gruber, Gerald P. Halpern (*director emeritus*), Dr. Malcolm Largmann, Dr. Selina Lee, Michael Rosen, Craig L. Slutzkin.

Also in attendance were Franco Scardino, David Zarowin.

- I. Co-President Craig L. Slutzkin called the meeting to order at 6:42 PM and welcomed the directors and other attendees. Attendees introduced themselves and shared what they had done over the summer after the minutes were approved since it was the first meeting of the 2017-2018 academic year.
- II. **Approval of Board Meeting Minutes.** The Board reviewed the minutes of the May 17, 2017 meeting. A motion to accept the minutes was made by Michael Byc and seconded by Karen Curzio. The motion to approve the minutes passed unanimously.
- III. **Executive Committee Report.** Mr. Slutzkin and Selina Lee reported the following activities and led several discussions.
 - A. **New Principal.** Dr. Lee opened her report by congratulating Principal Condon on the start of his first full academic year as Townsend Harris' principal. Both Mr. Slutzkin and Dr. Lee reported that from conversations with the staff, they have heard nothing but rave reviews of his leadership and work ethic.
 - B. **School Relations.** Dr. Lee reported that the first Student Leadership Team (SLT) was last Thursday. Both Lara Traum and herself were in attendance and welcomed the cohesive and collaborative spirit of the meeting, filled with thoughtful discussions. Dr. Lee reported that she attended a Senior Meeting in May, where she gave a short presentation about the THAA and presented the seniors with the mugs sketched with the Ephebic Oath.
 - C. **End-of-Year Celebrations.** Dr. Lee continued her report thanking the individuals for attending the various end-of-year celebrations in June. Debbie Michlewitz attended the Athletic Awards dinner. Ethan Felder attended Baccalaureate, Dr. Lee attended the Faculty Dinner, and both Mr. Slutzkin and Dr. Lee attended Commencement where the Founders' award was presented to the PTA.
 - D. **Videography.** Mr. Slutzkin reported that he, Jesse Ash, and Dr. Lee have re-engaged in the videography project. Although an October date was initially set for filming, some of those whom were to be filmed could not make the date. Therefore, they will be in discussion to choose the next day. Mr. Slutzkin's intent is to interview the rest of the original faculty (Valerie Billy and Odile Garcia), as well as teachers who worked at Harris over an extended period of time. Mr. Slutzkin has been releasing the videos on the THAA facebook page as part of Memoir Mondays. David Zarowin commented that even though he was not at Harris when most of the interviewed individuals were there, he was still able to make a connection to them. Dr. Largmann took a moment to thank the individuals, especially Jesse Ash, for working on these documentaries as re-watching them has stirred a natural reaction of nostalgia for him.

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- E. **Obituaries.** Mr Slutzkin reminded the Board that there is an obituary section in the *In Memorium* page of the THAA website. Whenever he comes across an obituary of alumni, it is added to the website. There are currently around 160 of them.
- F. **Projects Deferred.** Examples of projects deferred include the newsletter, social media and mentoring.

IV. **School Relations Reports.**

- A. **School Report.** Principal Brian Condon reported.
 - 1. Mr. Condon thanked the staff for a smooth and great start to the new academic year.
 - 2. There are four new teachers: one special education teacher from the Museum School, two new social science teachers (as Dr. Steinman has retired and Mr. Wood left the school), and a 2006 alumnus who is teaching Latin.
 - 3. There are only 16 students taking AP Latin, which is a class which is struggling. Franco Scardino comments that while seniors can take an additional class, oftentimes AP Latin is not their top choice. Mr. Condon and Mr. Olechowski, AP of Humanities, are working to breathe tangible life into the humanities. Dr. Largmann pointed out that the Classics (Latin and Greek) need to be conveyed and taught in such a way to show that it is embedded in every-day life. Mr. Zarowin also commented that an alumna he is still in contact with touted the benefits of AP Latin in her medical studies at Sophie Davis.
 - 4. In addition, Mr. Condon hopes to find an AP for the Foreign Languages and Art departments in the near future as that department has been without leadership for some time now.
 - 5. Both Mr Scardino and Mr. Condon spoke up re-constituting the “band” schedule for Harris.
 - 6. The yearbook “class”, which ran as a class for the past 8-10 years has reverted back to being a club.
 - 7. There have been no lingering issues related to the students from the events of last year’s interim principal. At the staff level, however, there is still some work to do in closing up lingering investigations properly.
 - 8. The New York Post has once again ranked Harris as the top public high school in NYC. Mr. Condon brought print-outs for everyone.
 - 9. Specific students have been awarded elite scholarships and recognition. This year we have a Milken Scholar. Milken Scholars provides financial assistance and access to a lifelong network of relationships to assist students as they move from college to grad school and the world of work. THHS students have been recognized by the Asian and Pacific Islanders American Scholarship Fund. We have two winners of the JP Morgan Smart Start scholarship and four Posse scholarship winners.

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10. Sue Brustein, AP of Mathematics and Science, is working with Mr. Condon to formally build a program around alumni returning to the school the Friday before Thanksgiving break. He also noted that the Alumni Association and the school can work together to strengthen mentoring opportunities.
11. Especially proud of the work that has been put into the Brag book and the fact that an alumnus prints the book out for the school, Mr. Condon distributed this year's Brag book.
12. This year, the educational directive of Harris is to advance academic conversation. Students need to learn how to elaborate and clarify points in their discussions, and these skills are recognized as important skills to have and maintain for success.
13. Mr. Scardino discussed the AP Capstone program, which has been so popular within the students. For this year, the AP Capstone program has already enrolled around 140 students over three grades. Mr. Scardino is working with Mr. Condon to explore the opportunities of embedding the first year of the AP Capstone curriculum, which is the seminar part, into 10th grade English which allows all students the pre-requisites to continue onto either a two- or three-year research project. If students complete the AP Capstone series with four other AP classes, they will have a special designation on their college applications. For this program to run in such a way, more teachers would need to be certified. Some options of future training were discussed, all agreeing that possibly hiring a master teacher to come to Harris to train the teachers would be most efficient. Currently, Brooklyn Tech and Francis Lewis HS both offer AP Capstone.
14. Gerald Halpern suggested to Mr. Condon that the school look into a specific music program that is hosted at Town Halls. Mr. Condon hopes to discuss this with Dr. Sato, one of three music teachers at Harris.

B. PTA Report. Michael Rosen reported.

1. Mr. Rosen reported that the reactions of the parents to Principal Condon were all positive
2. There are two new co-presidents for the PTA: Shibrah Jamil and Nicole Jean Remy.
3. Fundraising dates are set and are October 30, November 1st and November 2nd. The goal for this year is \$35k.
4. The PTA handbook, printed by the same alumnus who prints the Brag Books for THHS, is also available
5. The PTA is also focusing more on parent recruitment and interaction by translating communications to different languages and engaging them earlier than in the past
6. Initial events held by the PTA, including the freshman orientation and then the freshman breakfast, were well attended.
7. In an effort to make transitions year to year easier, the PTA executive board are operating in teams where a more experienced individual guides a less

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experienced one. For example, there are around four other parents who discuss issues related to the PTA and alumni association with Mr. Rosen, who then reports to the alumni association.

8. This year, the SLT co-chairs are Karen Lin and Jamie Rosen (Mr. Rosen's daughter).

V. Treasurer's Report. Craig Slutzkin reviewed the Treasurer's Report

A. Treasurer's Report.

1. Since the last Board meeting, the Association has dispensed funds for scholarships, robotics (this money is their own fundraising), dues mailing, Keepers' Day celebration, Faculty Professional Development, Graduation awards, Principal's discretionary fund, Humanities symposium, Japan Bowl and History Day.
2. There were close to \$13,000 in dues collected since the last Treasurer's report, along with approximately \$62,000 in contributions. The largest was a \$40,000 contribution for two years of awards for the Winston Scholarship and approximately \$12,000 for the 2017 Robotics program.

B. Fundraising Report.

1. Mr. Slutzkin has organized a call with alumni directly involved with fundraising. He is hoping that they can shed some light on some things which can be done to help start THAA on the road to raising notable funds.

C. Dues Report.

1. Mr. Slutzkin reported that a lot of effort was put into cleaning up the database and getting contact information for missing alumni.
2. Emails were sent out to individuals whom we have addresses for, asking them to let their classmates know we are missing their emails so that they can sign up and update their information on our database. Mr. Slutzkin went through the classes and did searches for them on Facebook. The hard part, however, is if someone has changed their names. He estimated that there was around a 15-20% response rate.
3. Mr. Slutzkin expects that more individuals will be paying dues in the coming weeks, however, we should think of ways that would engage alumni.

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VI. **Other Committee Reports.** Various members of the board presented.

A. Events Committee Reports.

1. Dr. Lee reported that a series of events occurred during the summer time: Twist & Sprout (a volunteering opportunity with the Queens Botanical Garden), Keepers' Day (first annual celebration for the Harris community), Subway series and Brooklyn Cyclones.
2. The culture vulture series of three events were not as successful, where the Met tour had to be postponed (but Ms. Michlewitz was able to meet the few interested parties separately). The Merchant House tour was postponed as well. Michael Byc was able to give his tour of Flushing Meadows Park.
3. Some suggestions to make certain tours, like the Met tour, more private and exclusive were discussed. Perhaps additional posts of the events would have helped as well. It was discussed that we could try to schedule one more Met tour for the Jan/Feb time frame
4. Ms. Curzio reported on the reunions. Both the Classes of 1992 and 2007 had their reunions on July 15th.
5. Some upcoming events include SLT and PTA meetings at the school. Founders' Day will be Friday, October 27th and both Mr. Slutzkin and Dr. Lee are expected to attend.
6. The annual meeting for THAA was discussed and it was decided that while having the meeting with SING provided no advantages to attendance, this year, the two events could possibly be de-coupled. Dr. Lee will visit the school's calendar and suggest some dates for the executive committee then move forward from there. It was discussed that the event could be re-branded with help with attendance and names like "Mimosas with Nix" would help attract alumni.

B. Membership Committee Report. (under Dues Report)

C. Mentoring Committee Report. (deferred)

D. Social Media Committee. (deferred)

VII. **Old Business.**

VIII. **New Business.**

The motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Halpern and seconded by Mr. Rosen. Motion was passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 9:24pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Selina Lee
Co-President