

**Townsend Harris Alumni Association, Inc.**

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors (as approved on November 30, 2016)**

**October 5, 2016**

**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, Jomaire Crawford, Ethan Felder (by phone), Ben Fung, Shari Gruber, Selina Lee, Dr. Malcolm Largmann, Kimberly Lo, Debra Michlewitz, Nily Rozic, Craig L. Slutzkin, Michael Rosen, Lara Traum and Vincent Yuen.

Also in attendance were Principal Rosemarie Jahoda (I/A), Kerry Rosen, Aquib Yacoob, Susan Karlic, Franco Scardino.

- I. Co-President Selina Lee called the meeting to order at 7:10 PM and welcomed the directors and other attendees.
- II. **Approval of Board Meeting Minutes.** The Board reviewed the minutes of the May 18, 2016 meeting. A motion to accept the minutes was made by Vincent Yuen and seconded by Ben Fung to approve the minutes. Motion passed unanimously.
- III. To open our meeting, attendees introduced themselves. We are a diverse, accomplished group including a research scientist, a civil engineer, and employee of Amnesty International.
- IV. **Some Townsend Harris HS News.** We recently lost two former Townsend Harris HS teachers: English / Humanities teachers Frank Polizzi and Steve Mermelstein. We took a moment to remember them. As part of his 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday celebration, original alum and renowned author Herman Wouk just wrote a new book. Co-President Craig Slutzkin presented a copy to the new I/A principal for the Townsend Harris HS library.
- V. **Executive Committee Report.** Dr. Lee reported the following activities and led several discussions.
  - A. We reviewed the Meeting Schedule for the 2016-2017 Academic Year. A list of the dates is included in the board meeting packet. Notices to remind board members are sent out about two weeks in advance of each date. Board members are asked to confirm their intended attendance.
  - B. Shari Gruber reported about the Membership Drive that ended in June. The drive garnered an increase of 147 members. Every week an update, broken down by graduating class, was disseminated. An email announced the result that the Class of 1994, with 16 additional alumni paying dues, won the contest. See page 11 in the Board Packet for the complete results. The Membership Committee is now working on creating an appropriate winning plaque for the class of 1994. Looking forward, a mailing will announce a membership drive in December, coordinated with a social media campaign. The committee is looking for a member of each graduating class to post to social media for the specific graduating class because that created a bump in payments. It would be a helpful step to have a graduating class membership chair. Another suggestion was to change the mindset about the date when people pay their dues, untying it from the Academic Year. Through the years, the membership period has fluctuated. Experience has shown that August is the worst time to kick off a membership push. A glitch on the website seemed to tell people who

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had paid membership dues that they hadn't when registering for reunion. There will be a paper mailing to solicit Membership Dues, independent of a drive.

- C. The Videography Project, directed by Jesse Ash, continues to interview original faculty. Only two are now missing. Two segments of a three part project are completed, taping interviews with original faculty and "old" alumni. The next part will record alumni from the reopened school, specifically the class of 1988. Other parts may be current teachers who are alumni and long serving teachers. A suggestion to rescreen at this year's Founders Day the teaser / trailer, which Jesse previously ran at a past Founders Day, received a positive response.
- D. The Mentoring Report was deferred because the Chair had to sign-off from the remote connection. The committee is trying to build connections between alums and current students in various ways through the THAA website.
- E. The Electronic Newsletter replaced a paper newsletter. The Electronic Newsletter resumed last year. Craig issues it. The next issue is in the offing. It's a brief, cogent recap of THHS and THAA current events.
- F. 10/28 Friday is Founders Day. We asked the new principal if we could host a post-Founder's Day collation in the Principal's Conference Room as we did last year. This activity began in 2014 as part of our community's celebration of the school's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the reopening of the school. Mr. Scardino noted that retired teachers and staff seemed to no longer be invited to this kind of event and he suggested that we try to remedy this. Some inquiry will be made by the principal's office about obtaining a master list of retired personnel from the Payroll Office. The Alumni Association would welcome access to such a list if it is available and permissible. We would invite retired teachers and staff to events.
- G. We discussed the Annual Meeting. Last year it was piggybacked on the performance day of SING to try to boost attendance since alums attend SING. We discussed whether we should we try that strategy again this year even though it had limited success last year. The Annual Meeting has experienced a drop off in attendance in recent years. We welcome other ideas to improve attendance. We discussed ideas like staging a homecoming event and recruiting a class rep to invite classmates. Conversation veered back to a discussion of getting more people to pay membership dues. The idea of paid members getting access to online yearbooks was suggested. The PTA Liaison again mentioned the potential in this area of a well planned Future Alumni Club. Mr. Yacoob, calling on his experience with Amnesty International, suggested telling the stories of alums who have received scholarships supported by the alumni dues. Principal Jahoda imagined a speaker series, as an ongoing event, targeting seniors during the Senior Meeting Band. Though alums are receptive to the theme of giving back to the school, it is difficult for alums get to school on a Wednesday on 12:00. The principal added that there could be a special assembly at a more convenient time. The question about the whereabouts of the graduating senior THAA reps from the last four years was raised. We tried to recruit students who would be attending college in NYC. We thought that these students now have other responsibilities that make it difficult for them to attend our meetings. Retired Principal Largmann suggested a meeting between alum /teachers and new teachers to pass on the connection and the traditions of the school.

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- H. Our Hall of Fame needs updating to include David Herszenhorn and Heather Nash since they were inducted more than a year ago. Selina Lee suggested approaching Gary Mellow who led the search for new alums for inclusion in the Hall of Fame. There are practical issues to resolve such as finding the space for new photographs. Mr. Slutzkin believes that retired art teacher Anthony Morales who designed and mounted the original display would be willing to help in this matter.
- I. An End of Year Portfolio 2014-2015, published by the Humanities Department, was distributed.

**VI. Principal's School Report. Principal Jahoda (I/A) reported.**

- A. The principal noted that there has been strong opening for the school year and provided a whirlwind review of the school's recent and upcoming activities. Students attended a guidance meeting. Students are invited for pizza with the principal. So far, she has met with the contingents from the Student Union and Classic, and the Female Volleyball Team is on deck. The Club Fair offered 30 clubs; students are required to participate in clubs. The annual Kick-off Mixer took place. The Principal and her visitor were amazed by the students' exemplary fire drill behavior. She is positively impressed by their compliance and appropriate behavior at all times. This is demonstrated by their ongoing work in the Election Simulation. A video is posted on the THHS website. Yearbook photos have been taken and the PSAT will be administered on 10/19. Phoenix, the literary and arts publication, is slated to win a Gold or Silver Crown Award from Columbia Scholastic Publications. The school fair was widely attended.
- B. The principal shared that it might be helpful to more aggressively inform College Admission officers about our school and its distinctive culture and high standards. Dr. Largmann talked about a letter that had been routinely included with students' college application materials that described the school's course of study. Also in the vein of the college application experience, the principal asked for THAA's financial support to send our guidance staff to attend NACAC, the National Association for College Admission Counselors, where they can network with College Admission Officers and forge personal connections. Mr. Slutzkin asked the principal to make a formal request. It was noted that the students no longer have a designated college counselor. The principal said that this arrangement is an experiment and that the school might move to a hybrid system.
- C. Kimberly Lo asked the principal about her vision for the school as we go forward. She spoke about the current work to move the school to a uniform online grade book. She spoke about creating a culture of candor where teachers will be free to innovate in the classroom.
- D. The issue of enrollment of Special Needs students was discussed and the principal thought that by approaching Middle School principals proactively that we might be able to recruit more academically able Special Needs students, perhaps encouraging some academically talented students to not seek decertification. Many current Special Needs students have not been a good match for our school's standards. APG Veronica York is involved with these possible strategies.
- E. In the context of our Special Needs conversation it was noted that an on-going concern is that not all our parents are English speaking. This has implications in various areas.

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

- A. Work continues to create an engaging, valuable Future Alumni Club offering a creative coupon book which would make connections between alums and current students.
- B. Two handouts, a brag book and the current issue of Classic were distributed.
- C. The PTA repeated their commitment to inspiring strong parent involvement.
- D. PTA President Susan Kralic spoke about creating and engaging the THHS family. One strategy she briefly described was an ongoing program of activities, suggesting that if the community does many diverse things together, it will foster a stronger connection to the school and the alumni association.
- E. The PTA has also had a strong start this year, with good attendance at the opening event. There were six tables of parents. There were Parent Volunteers at HS Fair. There is an ongoing monthly principal's breakfast.
- F. 10/20/2016 is the date of the next PTA meeting and the monthly meeting schedule is forthcoming.
- G. There is a \$10,000 rolled over fundraising deficit which the PTA is addressing. The Parent Handbook will be available and there is a new t-shirt for sale, continuing some successful fundraising strategies that were successful last year.
- H. The idea of joint PTA / Alumni Association activities was fielded.
- I. A Scavenger Hunt is in the planning stage.

**VIII. Other Committee Reports.**

- A. **Mentoring Committee Report** was deferred since Ethan Felder had to cut his connection.
- B. Vincent Yuen reported for the **Events Committee**. See page 12 of the Board Packet for his impressive list of events in the very recent past and future.
- C. Ben Fung spoke briefly for the **Membership Committee**, a conversation we pursued earlier in the meeting. Now he spoke specifically about correcting and updating information. It is a critical need. In addition, he reminded the Board of the upcoming Class of 1996 Reunion on 10/15/2016 at Flushing Town Hall. All are encouraged to attend.
- D. Kimberly Lo and Lara Traum reported for the **Young Alumni Committee**. Ms. Lo is meeting with Michael Byc to solidify plans for his guided tour. She also has obtained tickets for next year's subway series. Ms. Traum told us that a Boston event is in the planning stage.
- E. **Fundraising Committee Report** was deferred.

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**IX. Treasurer's Report. Craig Slutzkin presented the financial report for the period ending August 31, 2016.**

- A. Treasurer Slutzkin reviewed the report which appears on pages 13-20 in the board packet.
- B. Total assets amount to about \$2.3 million.
- C. Our financial strategy is that we spend the income and not the principle producing that income.
- D. This last financial period extended from 4/30 to 8/31/2016 which is the end of this fiscal year. It included the disbursement of scholarship awards at graduation. However, in order for a student to receive a financial award, it is required that the winner write a thank you letter and document that the money has been used for educational purposes by producing a transcript.
- E. Also indicated is the \$100 graduation award in honor of Tanya Odom. It recognizes a student who demonstrates a commitment to inclusion and diversity, ideas that define Tanya's personal and professional activities.
- F. Expenditures for the New Principal's Meet and Greet and Professional Development activities were entered.
- G. After review of the current year's budget, Vincent Yuen made a motion that it be accepted. The motion was seconded by Shari Gruber. Motion passed unanimously.

**X. New Business**

- A. Michael Rosen informed the board that the Robotics Team is looking for a sponsor. Craig Slutzkin will speak to Ms. Brustein, the Science / Math Department AP.
- B. Former Principal Barbetta resigned from the board on 9/15/2016.

Motion to adjourn was made by Lara Traum and seconded by Debra Michlewitz at 9:14 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debra Michlewitz  
Secretary