

**Lafayette Home and School Association (HSA)
General Meeting Minutes – May 15, 2014**

Attendees: 55 Members (42 general members & 13 board members)

Minute takers: Jenny Backus/Josh Gordon

Attachments: Budget Slides, Proposed Budget document, Sign-in Sheet, Election Results, Ballot, Letters from Parents & Teachers re Mindfulness Program

1. Welcome: Co-President Gayle Moseley called the members to order and opened the meeting at 6:35pm.

2. Election of 2014-2015 HSA & LSAT Board: HSA Board & LSAT Candidates in attendance introduced themselves. Election committee handed out ballots. Instructions were given and voting closed at 6:54pm. Election Committee retired to count the votes.

3. Approval of General Meeting Minutes from April 3, 2014: Josh Gordon moved to approve the 4/3/14 General Meeting minutes. Jen Lanoff seconded the motion.

4. Mark your calendars

Monday May 19 - Potomac Pizza Night

Thursday May 22 - Arts Night II (2nd-5th Graders)

Wednesday May 28 - Field Day for pre-K & K

Saturday, May 31 - Politics & Prose Book Fair

Wednesday May 21 - Teacher Appreciation Reception

Monday May 26 - Memorial Day - no school

Friday May 30 - Field Day for 1st -5th grades

Three days are now full school days: June 2, 19, 20

5. Principal Selection Committee Update given by Hope Scheller. Principal candidates will be interviewed on May 27. The committee will interview four to five candidates sent over by DCPS. Parents asked questions and Hope and Gayle responded.

Are there candidates from outside of DC? We don't get to find out who they are until 24 hours before the interviews are slated to start. We do know there is one candidate they are sending who has to travel from a distance.

How does the process work, do we have a committee? There is a principal selection panel. HSA voted on parent members. Teachers voted on teacher members. There is also a staff member, a community rep and a couple of alternates. Candidates have been vetted by DCPS. We gave DCPS some parameters. We'll have an hour with each candidate - and a list of candidates. We discuss them and get to ask follow up questions. We rank them post interview. We make recommendations as to which candidates we like.

Does DCPS give a lot of weight to our selection and recommendation? Hope related her experience when she served on a Principal Selection Committee at a different school. She said that DCPS did not hire the candidate that they recommended nor any of the candidates that they sent to their Committee to review.

What can you share with the broader community once you are done interviewing? Gayle said they won't know when they are done who will be hired. Hope said that at her old school, the DCPS announced the new principal 2 days after their Committee finished interviewing.

What are the attributes that the Lafayette Principal Selection Committee chose to focus on? Gayle said they stressed points like community - good teachers - art - music etc.

6. School Improvement Team Update by Gayle Moseley. She informed the parents that Lafayette is slated for a major modernization and ground is supposed to break in 2015. Target completion date is July 31, 2016. SIT team has met a few times and is comprised of teachers, parents, community members and staff members. An architect has not been chosen yet but firms have submitted bids and the SIT has been told that an architect will be chosen soon. The SIT team is currently working with DCPS on specs for the new building. Audience members had several questions that Hope and Gayle answered.

What do the specs assume as a projected population for the school? 850 kids

Is there any assumption of the kids remaining on site during the construction? The current plan is to keep the kids on site. Part of the architect's job is to prepare a swing plan for keeping students on site.

Where do they think the growth will come from? Gayle was not sure.

Are they going to do away with open classrooms? Gayle said that was the plan, that we would have classrooms with doors and walls but they would potentially have glass walls to try and recreate the open feeling we have now.

What are the main elements of the renovation? Hope said that they will most likely get rid of the 1970s wing - early childhood wing. Square footage won't increase a lot but space will be used in a better way. The idea is to get rid of all the trailers. They have learned from previous renovations to anticipate the need for more growth so they can avoid a situation when they renovate and then have to get trailers a year or two later.

Will they address heating and air conditioning issues? Hope said yes, they will start over and rebuild a new system going from a 2 pipe system to a 4 pipe system so that heat and air conditioning can be switched on and off when you need it.

What about plans for cafetorium - cafeteria or perhaps a separate performance space? They don't like to build a space just for a performance space so Gayle says that they expect that they will keep the idea of a cafetorium. The plan is to keep the stage. The new school will be ADA compliant so the stage will probably not look the same as it did before. There will be lots of storage.

Is there space available for computer lab, science lab? Mr. Wieand, our school's Technology teacher is on the SIT. The SIT has been talking about this. Mr. Wieand has indicated that he wants a separate computer lab. SIT is still trying to figure it this out and will be discussing with the new architect.

7. Boundary Working Group Update - Jared Cohen & Jenny Backus

HSA and Boundary Working Group members Jared Cohen and Jenny Backus gave a Boundary Working Group update. Jared said that they have been organized for about 1.5 years monitoring the school boundary revision process. Lafayette was early in organizing for boundary input. To date the Group has secured 800 plus signatures on a community letter expressing support for proximity, community and continuity in the city's school feeder pattern. City wide meetings by the DC Deputy Mayor for Education have been held on a series of proposals that included ideas like choice sets and application only high schools and there has been widespread opposition to many of these ideas from all parts of the city.

Deputy Mayor also presented data at the last set of community meetings about projected school growth and about feedback on the proposals from the community meetings they have been hosting to date. General opinion from this data so far shows attendees and residents reject city-wide choice options and this seems fairly consistent by race, region and education level across city. The Boundary Working Group will share these results on the website and via constant contact.

The next step process is that the Deputy Mayor and her Advisory committee will sift through the feedback and arrive on one final recommended proposal, supposedly this will happen in June, but it is not clear yet whether Mayor Gray will accept or not accept it.

Both Mayoral candidates have suggested they would not adopt the proposals currently being discussed but we are waiting to see what they say after the Deputy Mayor offer. Jared and Jenny urged parents to raise the boundary issue when candidates approached them. One parent made a suggestion that the Boundary working group call for a meeting with both candidates after the final Deputy Mayor's proposal comes out. Another parent asked if the Boundary group had any numbers on future crowding, trends at Wilson & Deal. Jenny said she saw data that numbers were actually coming down, perhaps pickup in economy is related factor. Marek said there are school-by-school projections for enrollment.

Code for DC has produced a very cool app called [Our DC Schools](#) to show DC residents possible boundary changes based on address and location. There are also places to engage with process on [DC Mayor's website](#) and at [EngageDC.org](#). Boundary group will share and will keep monitoring developments generally as election approaches.

8. Ways and Means

Shannon Behm gave the Ways and Means update and announced that the Spring Fair did very well thanks to lovely weather and great turnout. We brought in \$20,000 and we have only budgeted to bring in \$10,000.

She also said that there will be a Potomac Pizza Night to benefit Lafayette on Monday 5/19. The Lafayette HSA will get a portion of the proceeds from all sales from 4-9 PM. On Saturday May 31, the Lafayette Politics and Prose Book Fair will happen. Teachers will post reading lists for the summer before this date. Shoppers need to stop by the Lafayette table located on the bottom floor by the cafe and pick up a coupon. They will need to present the coupon when they check-out.

Shannon also announced that the HSA will sponsor the first annual Pi K Race It will take place in 2015 to honor former Lafayette Teacher Robert Thurston

9. New Business

Laura Phinzy asked Hope and Gayle/Ms Main if the school and or the HSA had a list of any events happening outside between now and the end of school. She said we can reach out and get the construction in the Park stopped during outdoor school events (Field Day, Class Parties, 5th Grade Graduation). She volunteered to send this list to our ANC Commissioner.

10. Proposed SY 2014 -2015 HSA Budget Discussion

Hope and Gayle started the 2014-2015 Budget discussion with a brief slide-show of five slides that outlined the budget and showed percentages by category of what budget dollars were being spent on. See attached for slides and budget document.

On the fundraising side, Hope said that our goal was to raise \$350 per student for the school. She said that as we headed towards our construction years, when it would be hard to do the Fall and Spring Fair the way we used to do it, we had made the decision to move the bulk of our fundraising efforts to the beginning of the year via the membership and dues process.

New goal for Membership on the Fundraising side

Hope and Jenny talked about how we had increased our goal for membership this year by \$20,000 to \$120,000 and had been doing outreach and research about how much other schools charged parents and how those programs were structured. Jenny said many local public schools in our area of the city ask for higher dues than we do. She warned parents that we were looking at asking for one larger donation at the beginning of the year and we would be doing a fundraising mailing over the summer that clearly showed where and how HSA dollars are spent and how they are helping our school and we would be following up this mailing with person to person fundraising with tablets and iPhones in front of the school in the first weeks and emails. She also said that she was considering creating a special Golden L level of donation where folks paid a high number in the beginning of the year that covered ALL their HSA expenses for the rest of the year (Auction tickets/Spring Fair Fast Pass/etc.) She asked that interested parents contact her with ideas.

LEP Program

Hope then talked about the LEP Program and explaining that she created a line item for it in the budget since the HSA was taking money in and then sending it out. She explained that vendors who were running LEP programs paid us a fee to help cover the cost of the website and enrollment process which amounted to about \$8,000 and we transferred about \$120,000 through us from families taking part in the programs out to the people who are running them.

Expenditures

Hope then moved to discussion of the expenditure side of the budget. She pointed out that they had changed the way we give teachers grants for their classrooms. New in 2014-15, teachers will receive \$150 for their classrooms to use any way

they like. In addition, each teacher will have access to an additional \$450 for their classroom and they will just need to submit receipts for what they purchased.

She also discussed the \$30,000 technology line item. She and Mr. Wieand explained that the teachers and he had recommended we get an online K-5 reading program called iReady. \$26,000 out of the \$30,000 budget is for a 3-year license for iReady. Teachers had been testing out the program this year. Teachers like that the program is adaptive to the student and includes levels for kids reading above grade level.

During discussion of the Principal's Fund, Ms. Main talked about her budget versus the HSA budget and made a plea for parents to register their children or else DCPS would start cutting Lafayette's budget and start cutting teachers. She said that only 267 parents have registered their kids for school next year.

Hope and Gayle then discussed the Contractor portion of the budget. They explained that we used to employ the art teacher and she is now back on the DCPS budget but that the HSA still was paying out her contract. Gayle said that after 2017 we won't have this line item anymore.

Coach Bell - Hope explained that Coach Bell worked at LAP in the afternoon and had started this year running organized sports programs during recess for each grade. He had kids try a variety of different sports both indoors and outdoors throughout the year. Coach Bell came to present to the HSA Board about how the program was working and what his goals were, including getting more girls involved. Jenny also spoke about how the program got started, how he was working closely with teachers and the counselors to help make recess and recess duty more manageable and how he was working on getting his coaching license.

Mindfulness Program - Hope and Gayle then began discussion about the Mindfulness Program, also known as the Peace program. Hope opened the discussion showing a slide of a pie chart that showed what percentage of the budget was spent on what. She asked Marek to give some background about how the HSA started funding the program and how the HSA had increased their support for the program over the past few years. In the 2014-2015 Budget, the Peace Program funding is roughly 25% of the entire budget.

Marek talked about how the HSA supported the program for around \$20,000 in SY 2012-2013. This support was for a class for some of the grades and a club for the students. He said that last year, we learned that over the past year or so the scope of the program increased dramatically with Ms. Ryden not only running classes for 1st through 5th grade, but also helping out in the Oasis and running a recess Peace Club. She also started a teacher training program in 2013-14. He said that Ms. Main, who is a strong fan of the program, offered to use funds from her line of the HSA budget to increase funding for the program to \$50,000 for SY 2013-2014.

He said that over this year, the HSA had heard many positive things about the program, but that there had also been some questions about the scale and scope of the program especially since it represented a big portion of the HSA budget. He said the Board voted, in a close vote, in their meeting to pull out the program for a separate vote and the purpose of this meeting on May 15 was to solicit input from parents and the community about the program and how it is has grown. He said that the Board wanted to be fully informed before making a final recommendation on the final budget. He then opened up the discussion and many attendees raised their hands to speak. He called on Ms. Main and Ms. Ryden to speak first.

Ms. Main talked about what happens when a New Principal comes into a school. He or she comes in with carte blanche with how the day will be used, but will have some basic standards and direction from DCPS (Ex: XX hours of reading, math etc). She said that while the new principal could come in and change priorities right away, she didn't think that was likely. She used the example of when she came to Lafayette there was no arts integration and that she took four years to get the Kennedy Center program put into place. She said the benefit of having the HSA support the program for another year is that it doesn't place any financial burden on the new principal.

She took a few minutes to explain how her DCPS budgeting worked and told the crowd that Lafayette is one of 6 schools in the city who are the lowest funded schools - the others being schools like Janney and Murch. DCPS has to give

Lafayette \$500K each year to get Lafayette to the funding minimum. She said that it costs about \$8,900 a year to educate a student at Lafayette.

96% of the DCPS school budget is salaries, assistants, art and music teacher, tech teacher. 4% of budget is leftover for other stuff. She uses this for stuff that gets used, consumed and thrown away. She said she spent \$45,000 this past year on paper towels, plastic trash bags and other consumable pieces

She said she prefers that the bulk of the HSA funding is used on the bigger and more long lasting programs like the library, the computer lab, and programs. She said that this is different from other HSAs. At Janney, their HSA buys all the consumables and at Ross, the HSA sets up a COSTCO account for the Principal.

Ms. Ryden talked about her program and how it came to be and what kind of results it had been producing. She referenced the event the HSA hosted right after the last General Meeting where she laid out details about the program and the story that Fox News ran this past Thursday night. She said she had received many testimonials throughout the year and prior to this meeting. She then answered a question from a parent, who **indicated their support for the program and then asked** her to explain what kids get today versus three years ago when she first started the program.

Ms. Ryden explained that the major difference between then and today is that all the children in the school in 2nd through 5th grade get a weekly class with Linda. She also runs a Peace Club, which she described as an alternative lunch and recess program that provided a sanctuary for kids three days a week from 12-1 that gets around 200 participants **in a week**. She also said she now serves on lots of School Committees and was a member of the Student Intervention Team.

She said that the program simply evolved in response to the demand in the school from teachers and counselors, Ms. Main, the children and their parents. She was frankly surprised to realize last year that she was basically working at the school full time.

She talked about how there is an unfunded mandate from DCPS that every school has to have a bullying program - our Peace program qualifies as our bullying prevention. She also said that our program has been seen as a model for other schools in DCPS and in the area and was featured on the news earlier in the week. She was getting lots of requests to produce training modules and materials

She also said that she thinks that DCPS should be paying for some of this going forward and pledged to work with DCPS. She said that while \$50,000 was a high number in the HSA budget, it wasn't a sustainable salary for a more than full time job and she was hoping to work with the community to find ways to support it more sustainably with grants, help from DCPS and other more long term funding streams.

Comments and Questions from Parents:

I think we are talking about two separate issues; the amount of money we are spending on the program and the amount of class time we are using for the program. I think separating them out and thinking of them as two things should be helpful. I think the Peace club is wonderful, but I do have concerns about the amount of time during the day.

Another parent whose husband works in law enforcement said that the program was really necessary especially when you look at our society today and look at things like Columbine. "Our poor children have all these things happening to them, so many stresses, they don't have a secure place to go and our society doesn't care."

Another parent asked Ms. Ryden about what kind of data she had collected about the effectiveness of the program, pointing out that we are going to need outside data if we are going to get outside funding. Ms. Ryden said that **in her opinion** it was definitely having an impact in a positive way. She said that the program was based on research. **She also stated that to date no data has been collected on our program and its effectiveness. She said that she wouldn't even know where to begin.**

Another parent said she supported the program and that is why she was there, but if folks wanted to really find out what the school was thinking, they should do a survey monkey.

A child Psychologist and new parent stood up in support of the program.

“I can’t say enough about social emotional health. I see lots of anxiety and depression. These skills are invaluable - it will get them through life - job - home - relationship. It is really crucial. I always wished when I was in practice that I could design something like this. I was so happy to see this program here when we can to Lafayette.”

A parent spoke out in favor of the program and related a personal example of what the program means for her family, especially after just learning about her son’s ADHD diagnosis. The program gave him a safe place to go. Another mother said her daughter suffered from anxiety and OCD and the Mindfulness Program sets a tone for the school and reminds kids every week that we have to be kind to each other. She said the Oasis is a safe place for kids.

“My kids learn this, they retain it and then it spreads. This is a great and meaningful program.”

Two teachers spoke out. Mr. C (4th grade) and Ms. Harn (2nd grade). Mr. C spoke about what a difference he saw in his first year with kids using mindfulness and said kids were getting important learning tools through the program that was helping them with academics. Ms. Harn said she served on the school climate committee and had some data to share about the program that showed its benefit. She said the school used to have a refocus room. There were 145 infractions during refocus regime. After peace program began with peace club, refocus room ended and haven’t had need for it since. Incidents on playground have gone down, such data speaks to benefit of peace program.

Board member Kristin Willsey stood up to speak to where the money for programs like the Mindfulness Program comes from. She noted all the parents who came out in support of the program and compared it to the lack of numbers of parents volunteering to chair the Auction and help out in the classes. She said for two years in a row that no one has stepped forward to chair the auction. She said the HSA is funded through donations from the parents and we needed more help and urged parents to lend their time to HSA.

A father of a 4th grader and 8th grader who went to Lafayette read a testimonial to the program (see attached), speaking about how Ms. Ryden helps kids reduce stress and how we as parents often focus on intellectual growth, the peace program gives kids tools that help them learn too. His older son was so inspired by what he learned from Ms. Ryden that he and his friend began a program to give out Peace Awards each week to recognize kids for their random acts of kindness during the week. “Unfortunately people don’t incorporate all the lessons you are supposed to learn in kindergarten and the program prepares kids to manage relationships and interactions.”

Rashida Mosby, our school counselor for the older kids, said the Mindfulness program has been an enhancement to the school counseling program.

A new pre-K parent said that she was from NYC and people there were amazed we had the program. She didn’t understand the context of the trade-off. What was being left out of the curriculum that Mindfulness was taking the place of? What wasn’t being funded that needed to be?

Hope responded that emails had come to her with parents complaining about the amount of time being spent on the program. Some parents are proposing a different kind of special for those 45 minutes like science and technology. Jenny asked how many emails had come in with concerns? Hope answered it was around 5 to 7 both for and questioning the program.

Ms. Yedwab said that the question of what was a special and what wasn’t a special was moot because at the end of the day that the new principal is going to make that decision not the HSA.

A parent who said that this was her first HSA meeting said she hadn't come before because she had felt alienated at the school and by the HSA, but she was there because the program means a ton to her daughter. She said the program is working and thriving at the school.

Ms. Breslin, a second grade teacher who has been at the school for 8 years, spoke about the progress she saw once Ms Ryden started her program. She spoke about how unique and special the educators training program was. She saw every type of learner benefitting from the program and it not only helps social and emotional learning, but that it also helps in cognitive and intellectual learning because the brain just shuts down when a child gets upset. The whole school community benefits from the program. The program, in context with music, art and PE had contributed for a very holistic feel for the school. Both she and a parent cited the work of Dan Siegel. She submitted a letter (attached).

Ms. Main spoke to the request for more science, saying that we are getting a new STEM teacher next year in the budget to help teachers and the school prepare for the new DC and national Science standards. There was discussion about whether that new STEM teacher would be teaching classes or helping teachers develop curriculum. Ms. Main thought the teacher would work like Mr. Wieand. **Jeanne Metzger pointed out that discussion at LSAT meetings were for the STEM teacher to be a special, not a resource.**

A father spoke up about the program and said it was a huge asset for his kids but did say he did have some concerns in terms of time. **He felt that the amount of time spent on the peace program could be shared with another special or additional classroom instruction time. He supported more STEM instruction.**

Another parent spoke about how the program was very essential for the school because of the rise of testing for our kids. She was worried what would happen if he didn't have the tools he had from the program to help him with his test anxiety. "The program has really helped the culture of the school and you would never know the school has 700 kids when you walk in the door. There is a calm and nice feeling."

Several parents and teachers volunteered to help write grants to fund the program long term, saying there was lots of money out there for this kind of program.

Would there be a vote tonight or at the Board meeting, what are the next steps?

Marek explained that every year the Board has to decide whether to continue the program and that the final Board revision of the budget would occur at the next Board meeting at the end of May and then the final budget would be brought to the membership in June. The purpose of tonight's meeting was to have some discussion and get input on the proposed budget prior to a final vote and that there would be no vote today. He repeated that the Board had voted in their meeting in a close vote to separate out the Peace Program for discussion and a possible separate vote during the final budget process so that we could gather input on the program.

Other Budget items for discussion - Coach Bell

Hope and Gayle then asked for feedback on other parts of the budget. One parent raised concern with the \$6,000 for Coach Bell and asked his hourly rate, which is around \$50/hour, although he is not paid hourly. She questioned the program, saying only a few children used it.

Several board members responded saying that Coach Bell had made a good presentation to the Board showing data about who was taking his class and what they were doing. They heard good results from other parents and teachers and the counselors. Beth Taubman spoke about how important it was to have different kinds of programs and places for kids to go at recess. Not every kid goes to Peace Club, not every kid goes to Coach Bell. There was also some discussion about the number of boys vs girls. Marek said Coach Bell had been experimenting with different kinds of sports to get more girls involved. Folks agreed they would like to get Coach Bell to come speak at the June meeting.

11. Election Results - In the one contested HSA election for 1st Vice President, Marek Gootman won. LSAT winners are Kerrie Bouker, Eden Burgess, Jared Cohen and Vonda Orders.

12. Adjournment - 9:52pm - Kristin Willsey moved to adjourn the meeting. Jenny Murray seconded it.