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**Friends of Essex Elementary School Meeting Minutes**

October, 2023 -- Zoom meeting

**Attendance:**

In Person: Betsy McKeen- Co-President; Maggie Gleason-VP; Rachel McInnis-Social Media Coordinator; Heather Harrell - Treasurer; Bradley Cooke - Secretary

Zoom: Beth Prince, Parent; Abigail Fay, Parent; Sheila McAdams - School Principal; Beth Kelley-1st grade teacher; Mr. Carpenter, music teacher; Jessica Torciollo - Grant Writer

**Welcome/Introductions:**

Maggie Gleason called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm.

**Welcome/remarks from Mrs. McAdams:**

The first iWalk event of the year was a bundle of fun. We had great weather for walking from the police/fire station to school and lots of teachers and children were in attendance.

There will be another one in February, and then a “Walk, Bike and Roll to School” in May.

Open House was great with lots of people in attendance! Sheila would like feedback on the format.

Maggie Gleason asked Sheila how the staff like this format, and Sheila explained that they love this format as they get to see not only their students, but former students can swing by to say hello, too. Betsy McKeen shared that some parents would like to hear more about the structure of the day during this event and hope that a combination of the original and new model could be considered in the future.

**Approval of minutes**

Betsy ran through key topics covered in the last meeting and the minutes were approved.

**Happy as a Clam**

Betsy shared that the event raised $14,558!! Betsy is working with a Manchester mom, Kelley Kelly, who is hoping to bring back to life the MMES 5K this spring. The hope is that these could become sister races and draw crowds from each other’s schools/towns. We are in good shape with a team for the 2024 Clam Races. Jenna Morris will be the race director next year, as Betsy “retires” - Thank you Betsy for all of your hard work on this over the years!!

**Hoedown Update (via email)**

* The event will be held on 20th at 6 pm. SignUpGenius for volunteers is marginal. We are lacking someone to run the CD player and other helpers throughout the event.
* Lisa Shotwell is the leader of the hoedown but thinks she may not be able to come due to a work conflict. She is doing all of the pre-planning still and is on top of it.
* Decorations will be delivered to the school the week of Hoedown so staff should be aware.

**Remarks from Staff**

Mr. Carpenter asked if we were providing water and apples at the Hoedown, which we are. He requested that adults help with crowd control. He also shared that Claudette Yutkins has pictures of scarecrows that will be up in the cafeteria and stuff for the photo booth.

Heather Harrell shared with Mr. Carpenter that she got his ukulele reimbursement request and she will get back to him soon.

Mr. Carpenter also noted that Daisy Nell will start next week.

**Scholastic Book Fair**:

The Book Fair will be held for the students on the 19th and 20th during the school day and then from 5:30 - 7:30 on Friday the 20th ( a half hour before and after Hoedown).

Jess Webb and Laura Campbell are taking it on with Scholastic. All money will go to the library and staff. Teachers can pick out $50 worth of books, and in addition, they may set aside books in a basket for families to purchase more books. We won't decide whether we will accept cash or Scholastic Bucks for the funds raised until after theFair.

Sheila made a suggestion that we designate any Scholastic dollars raised to purchase books that aren’t bought at the event. In addition, she noted that there is also flexible seating available though the Scholastic store that may be worth looking into.

We are asking families to submit money on an e-wallet so kids aren't holding $20 and it's more seamless ( E-wallet, cash, or checks are all still acceptable.) Link to e-wallet is going home in the Happenings today. Scholastic has certificates pre-made for kids who need funds.

**Change is Simple**

An Essex parent had a conversion with Change is Simple representative and it sounds like there is some discrepancy on CIS being improperly paid in the past. Betsy clarified that Friends of EES was not approached about funding CIS before fall 2022.

Sheila notes that her impression was that in 2020-2021, CIS provided programming at EES and Dr. Roberts thought they were grant funded (since they had been in the past). The school/district was then presented with a bill of $6000 but were surprised by it. Going into 2022 they had not budged for that, which is why they approached Friends of EES last year. CIS went to the Stars Grant to help fund the CID programming for EES. This year the cost is $16,000 which is too much. Sheila explained that we tried to package with Memorial but it's still very expensive. Cell Signaling is giving money to MMES for them to try the Change is Simple for the first time.

**Community Read Week**

* Emily Dwyer, Beth Kelly, Rachelle Russo, and Nicole Cucuru are the staff leading the event and are considering possibly holding this in January instead of November.
* Beth Kelley asked if the books have been ordered; and if not can they be ordered so they can be on site and ready to go.
* The chosen book is What Do You Do with a Problem? Jess has the final choice documented and can send that info, including how many copies and where to purchase, to Heather.
* Sheila will make Institution for Savings Grant “Thank you” stickers for inside each book.
* Maggie Gleason noted that once we have the info, we can blast it on social media!

**Messy Art Night**

Elle and Dana Woulfe will lead and they have picked dates - January 5th or March 22nd. Need to see if there is a 5th grade play conflict with the March date. Another option is a Thursday evening instead of a Friday evening.

**Teacher Appreciation Lunches**

Amanda DesRosiers is leading these once again. The first will be held on Tuesday 11/7 ahead of Wed and Thurs parent conferences. The theme is “Soup, Salad, and Bread” and it will be hosted by 2 or 3 classes, still undecided.

**EES Gear Sale**

Rachel McInnis will do it - she has taken the lead in the past for another organization. Takes about a week for them to get the store open. Should get it done ASAP ahead of holidays.

**Family and Business Appeal**

Thanks to Brandy Markey and the Board members, we have made some adjustments to the letter and Betsy asked for feedback and will finesse based on our suggestions. The hope will be to send the Appeal letter out to families in the next 1-2 weeks.

**Grant Writing**

Jess Torcicolo is submitting two Mass Cultural Council grants this month.

* Stars Grant likes specifics. Jess was planning to try this for the “Guest Arts Instructor” but could switch and write for Mass Audubon. The “Guest Arts Instructor” wording came from Sheila, so it was suggested that Jess check in with her to see if she had someone specific in mind / what is her vision?
* Essex Cultural Council Grant – Jess thinks for this year it is probably best to avoid Daisy Nell and instead try for Messy Art Night. The ECC grant is where we got Daisy Nell funds last year and Jess suggested she try for something else we were already budgeting for and do a funding swap.
* The Manchester Essex Performing Arts grant was for Daisy Nell…but $1000 is still needed.

**Enrichment Update (via email from Hilary)**

“There's almost zero change for enrichment since last meeting:

1. (Typical) It's been another month, so I will email the teaching teams I have not heard from to see if I can set anything up. You can see requests/etc on the sheet. Many other teams said that they were thinking about it - so staff response was super.
2. (Thank you’s) I want to make sure we understand if public recognitions of Gloucester Maritime (3-5th) and Mass Audubon (for the 5th program) are appropriate? They each have PR liaisons - and my gut is that it should come from the school, and not from FoEES. However we can flag the post to help, or maybe call the Cricket etc, have students interview each other, I'm happy to assist in any way. My goal is to have organizations understand that we will be appreciative publicly - for hopefully future freebies. I think this is a question for Mrs. McAdams as to how it should happen.
3. (Climate Teaching) I don't know if we are using Spring Forward to replace some/all of Change is Simple but if we are - we should also include them in #2 above. Sheila was speaking with them to see if they would be an appropriate fit. I have not heard yet. (they are $0 so no budget impact - HS peer leaders delivering specific curricula). If we are NOT using them, lmk and I can go back to the other options (bottom of the enrichment sheet).”

**Treasurer Update**

* Heather Harrell shared that the School Supply Fundraiser brought in $1097 of income which is less than what we budgeted for ($2400). However, we still look great because HAAC funds did so well.
* HAAC funding from Sponsors is still coming in.
* The Family Appeal has not been sent out yet - we have received some donations in kind totalling $175, and the Christina Bruce fundraiser raised $400 - Thank you Christina!
* As far as expenses go, we have spent $140 on office supplies and $947 on staff stipends, netting $15,000 thus far.
* During the school supply fundraiser we purchased things for Sheila's supply closet totalling $392.63 that we need to be reimbursed from the district.
* Amazon - A monthly $14.99 prime membership fee was automatically getting looped in with a budget for teacher stipends. Should we switch to an annual membership?
* Paypal - we had a “Paypal giving fund”, which is free, but “Paypal payments” has a fee taken out of it. Betsy has now removed all links to Paypal payments.

Betsy requested that Heather add a note in the budget for payment to GoDaddy [for our website] It is on autopay but will need to be updated when the card expires.

**Fundraiser Ideas**

Brandy Markey had 2 great ideas. One is piggy back off a restaurant night. We show a movie at the school and provide childcare and parents can go have date nights.

The other idea would be to host separate “Moms Night or Dads Night” social nights and perhaps make them grade level based.

Maggie also suggested the new business in town, Estuary, hosting something? She also noted that any parent who has ideas, please share them!

**Funding Requests**

* 2nd grade teacher Lindsay Kasmarcik requested a rug for her classroom. These funding requests come from our reserve budget. We bought one for Ms. Jordan spring 2023, so it seems fair to do the same for the other classroom.
* Betsy made a motion to approve this request and Maggie seconded.

Mr. Carpenter quickly asked if Hoedown fliers are done and have been sent out. They have!

Maggie Gleason made a motion to adjourn at 8:51 and Betsy seconded.

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Next meeting: Thursday November 2nd, 2023 at 7:30 pm in person and on Zoom.