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**Friends of Essex Elementary School Meeting Minutes**

**April 6, 2023 -- In-Person/Zoom meeting**

**Attendance:**

**In-person:** Betsy McKeen-President; Maggie Gleason - VP; Heather Harrell - Treasurer; Rachel McInnis-Social Media Coordinator; Jessica Torcicollo - Grant Writer; Beth Kelley - 1st grade teacher; Kate Koch-Sundquist- parent; Christina Bruce - parent; Mandy Beausoleil - parent

**Via Zoom:** Bradley Cooke- Secretary; Hilary Mattison - Enrichment Coordinator; Beth Prince - parent

**Welcome/Introductions:**

Maggie Gleason called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm, and the previous meeting’s minutes were approved.

**Hello from staff member Beth Kelley, 1st grade teacher**

* March Madness is winding down to two books. They will vote next week for the final.
* The school is planning something fun for Memorial Day, tbd.
* The 5th grade play was fantastic!
* Tis the season for field trips! (see Enrichment update below for more info)
* The Community Read book for fall 2023 will be “What Do You Do with a Problem?”
	+ Jess Torciocollo (grant writer) will apply now for a Hooper Fund grant to fund this for fall 2023.
* Teachers still have stipend money to spend. Betsy McKeen has tried to streamline the process by adding a staff page on the FoEES website ([www.friendsofees.com](http://www.friendsofees.com)) that includes links for each path to funding. It was suggested that she add one more link for those that want to use their stipend but the item is both not on Amazon and the teacher would like FoEES to pay for it up front.
* Playground - There seems to be four clear next steps for the playground:
	+ Building the furniture
	+ Planting (Heather Harrell shared that plants will be delivered the first week of May)
	+ Naming the playground
	+ Planning a celebration (ideally middle/end of May)

The board will plan to follow-up with Mrs. McAdams to get started on these processes.

**New Fundraiser Proposal**

Christina Bruce would generously like to host a FoEES fundraiser through her photography business. She will offer 15 minute sessions with 5 digital images that families can sign up for. There will be a limited number of sessions and a flat fee due up front. A percentage of the proceeds will go toward the school. Currently slated for Monday, August 28th starting at 3 pm. She will be in touch with further details.

**Summer Reading Challenge and Raffle**

Ms. Silag sent an email on 3/27 saying that the Manchester Branch of M&T bank will be sponsoring the bike raffle for Essex students to celebrate 2023 Summer Reading. They will send out a check for $400 to be used in September when the raffle is held. Winning students will get to pick out the bike themselves. Ms. Silag is also hoping to offer a small prize to each student who participates in Summer Reading, and will be back in touch for a funding request for FoEES for that.

**Enrichment Update from Hilary Mattison**

**Kindergarten:** is headed to Ipswich River Audubon Habitat visit on 5/25

**1st Grade:** Remaining cash may go toward the bus for the bus-only trip to Kestrel Adventures/Beach

**2nd Grade:** Looking at Acton Science Physical States of Matter 1. HM emailed to check on availability - they have limited days and are trying to do full days (4-5 classes). HM is trying to recruit another grade for ‘free’ in order to secure this for 2nd. They have offered two days that don’t work - a half day and the last day of school. HM asking for another option.

**3rd Grade:** Essex River Cruise is planned for June 2nd

**4th Grade:** Museum of Science is planned for 5/16. Potentially looking at ATSW for the second one.

**5th Grade:** will not be using their remaining funds as they have lots of events and activities already planned.

Heather Harrell, treasurer, noted that all field trips above have been paid for.

Hilary also shared two possible opportunities for next year:

1. Gloucester Maritime may have a free or low-cost Marine Science program for K-5, **HM to touch base and understand their timeframe**
2. Mass Audubon can potentially do a program at the school’s pond for K-5 as a project-based seasonal observation journal or ecology project for upper grades

Jess Torcicollo, grant writer, will apply to Cell Signaling (due May 1) for Gloucester Maritime - Hilary will give Jess a high level budget number to propose in the grant application.

Finally, Hilary proposed a small platform be built by water near the playground for kids to stand by the water. Betsy McKeen noted that the remaining playground budget could likely cover this.

**Grant Writing Update from Jessica Torcicollo**

Jess is writing three grant requests next month - Hooper Fund, Cell Signaling, and Cape Ann Community Foundation.

**Treasurer Update from Heather Harrell**

* Heather reported some comparisons to our budget projections for this year. Income was $2900 more than projected and we are under budget by $3700 for expenses (this is likely due to many teachers not using their stipends).
* Recent costs for the playground were $6200
* Stem night expenses are coming up
* Need to pick a date in May for the board to form a budget for next year.
* Taxes are being completed by Essex CPA.

**Book Fair**

The fair with Beverly Bookshop brought in a profit of $6,569 minus $300 that was donated. We owe the bookshop $5407, leaving us with an $862 profit. There is also an additional $112 that is in the Venmo account from the Book Fair. There was a discrepancy in the books sent back, possibly because we did not have a single person in charge. Maggie Gleason suggested that moving forward we ask Beverly Bookshop to send a designated seller to help streamline / manage the process, similar to the Scholastic Book Fair.

**STEM Night**

STEM Night is tomorrow! Mandy Bousouleil is handling the food for the exhibitors (approx. 40 people). This year we could use the CST grant to fund this which is amazing! There are a lot of exhibitors scheduled to attend. This is a FREE event but FoEES will staff a donation table with a QR code.

**Restaurant Night**

The next one is scheduled for Wed, April 19th from 5-9 at The Farm. It will be dine-in only and The Farm has requested participants present the Restaurant Night flier. Maggie Gleason made a flier and will send it to Maggie Safrine for families to receive shortly. Suggestions for future restaurants include Ripple on the Water and Riversbend? Maggie Gleason will ask Caitlin Cann about these ideas for June.

**Staff Appreciation Week Planning**

This will be the week of May 1st, about a month away. Amanda DeRoisers will work with Hilary Mattison on this. It will be a similar set up as last year with one event occurring each day. Amanda and Hilary are currently looking for donors with the mini carnations. Maggie Gleason suggested that they send out any volunteer requests/parent sign ups sooner rather than later so working parents can plan ahead.

**Field Day Planning**

Last year it moved away from the last day of school and in 2022 it was no longer a whole school event. Betsy McKeen asked if there was an update for this year so we can start to plan ahead. Historically FoEES has contributed watermelons, and we would love to support Field Day once again somehow.

**Business appeal**

A second mailing this year will be sent out this week. Board members stuffed envelopes earlier this evening. A separate letter was sent out to those businesses who have already donated thanking them for their contributions.

**Budget Meeting for Board Members**

This will take place on Thursday May 18 at 7:30 at Maggie Gleason's home.

**Current and Open Board Positions**

* President - Betsy McKeen **- looking for someone to shadow her next year**
* Vice President - Maggie Gleason **- looking for someone to shadow her next year**
* Secretary - Bradley Cooke
* Treasurer - Heather Harrell - **looking for someone to shadow her next year**
* Social Media Coordinator - Rachel McInnis
* Grant Writer - jessica Torcicollo
* Enrichment - Hilary Mattison
* Kindergarten Playdate - Jess Webb
* First Day Coffee - Betsy McKeen and Rachel McInnis
* Happy as a Clam - Betsy McKeen, Mackenzie Poulos, Jenna Morris, Sarah O’Connor
* Hoe Down - Lisa Shotwell
* Messy Art Night - Elle Woulfe
* Polar Plunge - Betsy McKeen
* Book Fair **- There is someone thinking about it TBD**
* STEM Night - **OPEN**
* Community Read - **Kate Koch ran this year….may not need to replace this role.**
* Teacher Appreciation Lunch Coordinator - Amanda Desrosiers
* Teacher Appreciation Week - Amanda Desrosiers and Hilary Mattison
* Family Directory - Betsy McKeen
* School supplies fundraiser **- Hilary Mattison would like to recruit help**

**Black Earth Compost**

Bradley Cooke brought up the idea of using our platform to encourage the town to sign up for compost collection since the state is starting to regulate the amount of solid food waste that can go in landfills. She was going to do some research to see if there is any incentive program in place that offers a kickback (monetary or compost) to school which would make it relevant to FoEES. It was recommended Bradley reach out to Sheila McAdams as she already has connections with Black Earth.

**School Budget**

Manchester Essex School Committee is going for an override this year to stop dipping into our reserves. The town of Manchester has approved the budget, but there is significantly more push back from Essex. Kate Koch-Sundquist proposed that Friends of EES host / sponsor a family friendly meetup/ Q&A info session to answer questions to make sure families know what is happening with the school budget. The school committee is working on getting babysitting for families so that everyone can vote on May 1. Maybe Friends of EES can help donate some funds for this? The meet-up is tentatively scheduled for Saturday, April 29 at the playground from 8:30-9:30 am. FoEES will offer coffee and donuts.

**Teacher Stipends**

* Beth Kelley's request is approved.
* Ms. Yutkins requests $30 for art books to learn how to draw. Betsy made a motion to approve. It was seconded and approved.
* A funding request came in from Ms. Jordan for a rug large enough for all students to sit on. She proposed a rug cost of approximately $500. Heather Harrell offered to help research other options to potentially bring the cost down. We will defer the vote for this request to May 18th.

**Whale Mobile Donation**

FoEES received a donation of $200 from Denise Jacobson in memory of her nephew Brad Buckley. Her touching letter was read aloud at the meeting. The letter shared that she would like the funds to go toward future Whale Mobile presentations at EES.

Maggie Gleason motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:59 pm and Betsy seconded.

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**Next meeting: Thursday May 4, 2023 at 7:30 pm in person and on Zoom.**