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**Friends of Essex Elementary School Meeting Minutes**

December 7, 2023 -- Zoom meeting

**Attendance:**

In Person: Betsy McKeen - Co-President; Mandy Beausoleil- Co-President; Maggie Gleason-VP; Bradley Cooke - Secretary

Zoom: Sandy Jordan - 2nd grade teacher; Abigail Hough, Parent; Jessica Torciollo - Grant Writer; Sheila McAdams - School Principal; Rachel McInnis-Social Media Coordinator; Richard Carpenter - music teacher

**Welcome/Introductions:**

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

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

Mrs. McAdams provided some updates regarding the school budget for next year:

* On December 13th at 6:30 pm, there will be a public presentation of the budget\*
* She has included a proposal for $10,000 dollars to be budgeted for an upgrade of EES library as a report revealed that the average age of books currently in the library is from 2006 and the industry standard is 12 years back.
* This budget item would help significantly with us replacing the many outdated books that will need to be weeded out from the main library as well as classroom libraries.
* This will be a capital request and not an annual expenditure
* The other request Sheila made is for $5 - 7000 for updated instruments for general music

\*Betsy Mckeen added that in addition to the Dec 13th meeting at the high school, there will be an Essex based meeting on January 23rd (a Tuesday night). This will officially be the second look at the budget but a very critical meeting for Essex residents in particular to attend.

* Sheila added that from a fundraising standpoint it would be great to coordinate efforts and host a movie night for the kids so that parents can have a date night for the next Restaurant Night we host.
* She also suggested we coordinate a Read-in (come in your jammies and drink hot chocolate!) and perhaps even hook that up with one of the Restaurant Nights.

\*Chaperones will be needed for both of these ideas!

* To help make these ideas happen, FoEES will let Sheila know the date for the next Restaurant Night ASAP. Her preference would be to host a Read-in on a weeknight so the custodian doesn't need to make an additional stop over the weekend.

**Comments from Ms. Jordan**

“Thank you to the group for all contributions over the years, especially her new rug last year!”

**Comments from Mr. Carpenter**

* Needs the invoice for Daisy Nell for $2500; FoMEPA is planning to cover $1500- hoping to pay her at assembly on the 21st (need to pass info along to Heather)
* He noted that we will need eyes on children at the front area of the auditorium during the holiday performance- Fiona made a SignUpGenius for volunteers (3rd grade parent and Sheila McAdams)
* He also gave a shout out to Sheila for the Toy Drive!

**Grant writing Update from Jess T**

* Re: Daisy Nell funding - she applied and received the Stars Grant for Daisy Nell but suggests why don’t we pay in full, and perhaps the FoMEPA wants to help us in funding something else? Would FoMEPA support composers in residence (but it was noted that they are already supporting that with a $1500) Or can we budget the extra $1500 for next year? Stars gave $3200 so we are already up $750 towards Daisy Nell. Eric Dendt is the contact at FoMEPA. Sheila and Richard will reach out to them and propose that.
* Jess shared that the Stars Grant will be sending 3 diff docusigns to Heather/Betsy so they should keep an eye out for those - it may be a little while but she will follow up if needed.
* Jess shared that she applied to New England Bio Labs and grant committee members reached out and asked some questions (it was actually an Essex dad and they had a nice convo…hopefully a good sign!)
* She also applied to the National Grid Foundation.
* She received a notice in the mail from Spaulding Education Fund that they had reignited the foundation and she reachout out to them immediately.

**Minutes Approval**

The November minutes were approved.

**Enrichment Update**

Mandy shared updates from an email from Hilary Mattison (Enrichment Coordinator).

(pasted from email) For author visit, Hillary wanted to consider using the cash to hire a collections consultant to refresh the library instead. The new principal can start afresh next year with how they want to integrate author visits - and the library will be in a good place. It can be a teaching thing too - collections overhaul is a really interesting process! This would let Ms Silag continue her considerable responsibilities, and a refresh can happen in the background with an outside contractor. We could look at the Essex collections librarians since they already know the community!

Sheila noted that they weren't sure we could incorporate an Author’s Visit in classrooms so we are still on the fence on that.

Betsy shared Hillary’s awesome document that outlines how much enrichment funds each grade level has spent / has left and asked if this would be helpful for teachers to see? Ms. Jordan says yes! Betsy will ask Hillary to share with staff.

**Treasurer Update**

Heather Harrell, Treasure emailed her update (pasted below):

1. The 'Actual' tab on the budget spreadsheet is current and can be reviewed as to where our financials are

2. Sheila has check for Sheila's supply closet reimbursement

3. Sketchbook request came in- needs discussion ***(see funding requests at end of minutes)***

4. Haven't received an Docusign request for the Mass CC grant yet ***(discussed above in grant writing update)***

5. Grade 3 field trip to Paul Revere House has been sent

6. Scholastic book fair payment has been sent (***Maggie shared that******staff will soon be getting $200 to spend on books*)**

7. Additional Family Appeals have come in via Paypal, added to log- Venmo transfer didn't come through to Quickbooks yet so not in actual numbers yet

8. Lisa Shotwell would like to be considered for the Treasurer role starting FY 24. Had coffee with her and talked about the role, sent along the powerpoint for training. She didn't run away so thumbs up from me!

\*\*training ppt is not completed yet, need team members to fill it in with their roles\*\* - it's in the drive and attached

9. I'd like the okay from the group to look into opening a Money Market account for a higher yield on the sizable amount that we currently have in our savings. This is free money that we are missing out on with this money just sitting there.

***Betsy made a motion to approve Heather taking steps toward doing that***. ***Maggie seconded it and all approved***.

**Staff Appreciation Lunches**

* Staff at the meeting shared that they loved all the different soups but to please remember the gluten free folks!
* We will include a gluten free option on signups for the next round.
* Next one is March will be (K-2) date TBD
* May lunch will be for Teacher appreciation (May 6-10) details TBD

**Restaurant Night**

* CK included alcohol by mistake so they are reworking the numbers now - Maggie Gleason will check back in with them on Wednesday
* Next one is at Woodmans - Maggie is working with Rhonda Woodman after holidays

**Polar Plunge**

* Set forJanuary 6 at 9 am (Saturday Morning at front beach at Conomo point)
* Emily Stanely will be helping Betsy to organize it.
* This raises money by registering to plunge but the majority of money comes from people nominating others ($15 to plunge or $40 to not plunge)
* Betsy asked if we can use the lobby for a Polar Plunge update? Sheila said yes.

**Community Read**

* This will be in January (the 2nd week we get back)
* SEL focus for book and extend beyond that to just problem solving
* There is a call into April so that maybe we can have a connection to the library
* Hoping to make it a week long thing rather than just a day or two
* Betsy noted that if they need parents to help tell us!
* Artwork in the book starts dark and then it gets bright so Claudette is discussing what she can do from an art project piece
* Mr. Carpenter is considering setting the book to music with his classes - fun!

**Messy Art Night**

* Elle Woulfe is running this again - will plan the whole thing but may or may not be there
* Scheduled for Thursday March 14th

**STEM Night (a combined event this year with Manchester)**

* Slated for March 27th (weekend after 5th grade play)
* Mandy went to a meeting about this and they were very sensitive to making sure that Essex doesnt feel lost in combined event
* The women spearheading it include Heather Leonard (curriculum director for the whole district) and stem leader at high school and Jenna Ware (used to run it for Essex)
* The gym and caf will be used so they can put younger student stuff in the caf and older student stuff in gym
* They are hoping to find some Essex specific things (Essex shipbuilding museum) and whale mobile to make sure Essex feels included and highlighted
* No one is too worried about parking
* The grant money leftover from Stem night is from Cell signaling - Manchester is emailing them to see if they will give them grant money next year

**Gear Sale Update**

* Raised $213.28 - should be a check coming to the school (we had budgeted for $250)
* Perhaps we reopen it again in the spring?

**Gift Giving Guide Update**

* Maggie asked that Ms Jordan please ask the staff to fill that out soonish
* Ms. Jordan wondered if families will also be asked to make a charitable donation rather than give a gift to a teacher - teachers worry that families will feel like they have to do both - we assured her this is not the case.

**Family and Business Appeals**

* Business - $1750 and just got $1000 from Bank of Gloucester and Gaybrook ($500 each)
* Family Appeal - Venmo - $343 - 6 families; Paypal - 28 families donated ($ amount TBD)

**Board Positions**

* Treasurer candidate is Lisa Shotwell
* VP - Maggie G will make a video / blurb to encourage someone to consider the role

**Staff Stipends Update**

* Mr. Burnett moved grade levels and made a wishlist to Amazon and used his up - awesome!
* Staff who have used their $200 → Music, ACE, Math specialist, Demietri, OT, Kasmarcik, Orlando, Special Ed, Russo
* Staff who have not used their stipend, please go to FriendsofEES.com and there's a staff link you click - very straight forward process now

**New Funding Requests** (beyond the $200 stipend)

* Ms. Yutkins - requests reimbursing for sketchbooks for K and Grade 2 (100 books) Manchester Memorial PTO funds this every year for the Kindergarten. It will be $500 this year and then $250 moving forward (perhaps from Enrichment?) Betsy made a motion to approve that funding request and Maggie seconded.

Maggie Gleason made a motion to adjourn at 8:48 pm. Bradley Cooke seconded.

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