

# Friends of EES

## Friends of Essex Elementary School Meeting Minutes January 10, 2022 -- Zoom meeting

**Attendance:** Zoom meeting (Betsy McKeen-President, Maggie Gleason-Vice President, Suzanne Bediz-Secretary, Caroline and husband (?)Gressler, Richard Carpenter, and Jennifer Roberts)

### **Welcome/Introductions:**

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

### **Welcome/remarks from Dr. Roberts:**

Dr. Roberts reported that everyone was happy to be back from the holiday break. It was much needed and appreciated by staff. The increase in Covid, made the week coming back challenging, but this week is better. The playground project is coming along; there were landscapers out to level and build walkways. The Beautification Project (Mrs. Walsh) for the front of the school is coming up in the spring and Jennifer will reach out to teachers (School Council) and Mrs. Walsh to continue working on this project to ensure that it is finished in a timely manner for spring planting.

MCAS testing will be scheduled from April 25 to May 27. This is the state's testing window and EES's specific schedule will be forthcoming soon. Friday, January 14 is a professional development day, so there will be no school for students. A Digital Learning Specialist was hired for the Elementary level in the district. This is not a teacher but will provide resources such as apps and other digital resources, and assist teachers in using technology in the classroom, updating websites. Welcome, Chris Dwyer to the Manchester-Essex School District. Chris will be shared with MMES and will be at EES on Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. In addition, a Math Specialist will be hired for the district after data was presented to Superintendent; the district is hiring one full-time person to work among all schools, provide Professional Development, provide RTI (Response to Intervention) support, and model best practices. The district is currently interviewing for this position.

**Covid update:** There are many students out (28 students) either from quarantine or illness themselves. Five staff members were out. This week is looking better, with about ½ as many absences as last week. The nurse is amazing; she is in early and promptly responds to emails. The protocols have been tight and there has not been any spread within the school (no close contacts).

**Winter Book Warm-Up for Staff:**

Hannah from The Book Shop was very overwhelmed during the holiday season. Thoughts for next year would include that it might be better to plan the pick up from FoEES to distribute to the teachers rather than the staff from The Book Shop.

**Music Enrichment Opportunities:**

The second grade Artist in Residence for Folk Music program, which used to be paired with the Hoedown (prior to Covid) involves Daisy Nell, a local musician, but she is not comfortable being in the building at the moment. Mr. Carpenter would like to push this project as close to the end of the year so that outdoor instruction could be possible. This enrichment program will cost between \$2200 - 2300. Previously, funds for this enrichment activity were gathered through grant writing initially (Spaulding). FoEES has some enrichment budget flexibility but will determine the exact amount available. Mr. Carpenter will check in with Daisy Nell in March to see if there are dates that will work for her.

A second music enrichment program, 5th-grade Composer in Residence has been funded historically through a variety of grants including the STARs grant. Mr. Carpenter and FoEES will continue to look for an additional source of funding for this enrichment activity. FoMEPA (Friends of ME Performing Arts) has been contacted regarding funding possibilities and so far there has been no response.

- Cost is \$2200 (FoEES has an \$800 rollover from the previous FY21 when the program did not run)
- FoMEPA request was \$1000
- The activity will still need \$400 (Is it possible to use funds from the enrichment budget?)
- This project has previously been funded by the Hooper Fund (the fall deadline for grant applications has passed)

Richard Carpenter will contact Maggie with updates.

**Courtyard Seating:**

The new seating should have been delivered, however, it has not been seen by Dr. Roberts. Twenty (20) Adirondack chairs for the courtyard were dropped off last week. This fulfills the request from Mrs. Jordan.

**Teacher Appreciation Lunch Update:**

This year teacher lunches will be held in January, March, and May. Melanie Healey is the chairperson. The first luncheon will be on January 18th. The first luncheon will be hosted by grades 5, and two other grades. A Sign Up Genius will be forthcoming for the first luncheon.

**Community Read Update 2022:**

There have not been any new developments. The next formal Community Read will be in Fall 2022 and the FoEES, through grant writing (to the Hooper Fund) will support and purchase the book for each family at EES. Teachers will plan activities to promote reading as a fun event; The date has been moved to align the event with the Hooper Fund grant that is approved in the spring. Theresa Whitman would like to hold an informal community read this spring. There is a box of books from previous Community

Reads which could be used to have an informal event. Theresa will be looking for a replacement to kick off this informal Spring event and take over for the Fall 2022 Community Read.

**Polar Plunge 2022:**

There has been a date change. This event has moved to January due to the ongoing construction of the seawall at Conomo Point (especially Front Beach). The location has changed to Clammer's Beach. The Essex Police Department, Fire Department, Harbormaster, and the Board of Selectmen have approved the new date and location. Elle Woulfe and Kerry Greene will be helping out Betsy. FoEES will request to see if the Mill could donate hot chocolate. So far, there is not much movement on the website. We will increase the posting on Facebook, have Maggie send emails, and reach out to teachers to share with students to promote the event.

**Grant Proposals:**

FoEES is looking for help with grant writing. There are many local grants that are available including the Hooper Fund, which has a fall and spring due date for their grants. Based on the recent request for FoEES members who have grant writing experience, Jessica Torcicollo, and Mr. Gressler could support FoEES through this important activity that benefits the enrichment budget.

**Enrichment Update:**

There are no current updates from Letizia (Enrichment Coordinator). This year seems to be functioning as a transition from virtual/online enrichment activities to more in-person walking/outdoor activities and trips. Teachers are planning the activities and FoEES can support with payment and logistics.

**Business and Family Appeal:**

- Family Appeal has a donation of \$100 by check.
- Business Appeal - this has not gone out yet. The letter is written; the spreadsheet needs to be merged into labels, and the board can get together to stuff envelopes to get the appeal mailed out soon.

**Treasurer's Update:**

The current mail and the family donation will be forwarded to Heather Harrell (treasurer). The Squarespace account will be renewed. Betsy paid \$192 for the year and will submit a reimbursement form.

**Stipend:**

Two teachers used their stipends this month, Ms. Kaczmarcik and Mrs. Samsel, who purchased book bins for the leveled texts in the literacy closet.

**Prior Meeting minutes approval:**

The minutes from the November 2021 meeting and December 2021 meeting were approved.

**Teacher Funding Request:**

There are no new requests.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:39 pm.

**Next meeting: February 7, 2022, at 7:30 pm (Zoom meeting)**