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**Friends of Essex Elementary School Meeting Minutes**

January 4, 2024 -- Zoom meeting

**Attendance:**

In Person: Betsy McKeen - Co-President; Mandy Beausoleil- Co-President; Maggie Gleason-VP; Bradley Cooke - Secretary; Caitlin McShera, parent; Heather Harrell, Treasurer; Lisa Shotwell, parent

Zoom: Rachel McInnis-Social Media Coordinator; Emily Dwyer, teacher; Sheila McAdams - School Principal; Abigail Hough, parent; Beth Prince, parent; Hilary Mattsion, Enrichment Coordinator

**Welcome/Introductions:**

Maggie Gleason called the meeting to order at 7:32 pm.

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

* Community Read Week is up and ready (There is a great detailed summary in newsletter)
	+ Teachers will kick it off later next week with a goal of sending things home over the course of the month (topics covered will include “how to persevere” and growth mindset)
* After school activities are going to be great! Sewing is full (boys and girls) but the STEM Explorers (Grs 4 & 5) on Monday and Old Timers Board Games (Grs 2-5) on Wednesdays still have room
	+ Math tutoring, which fills 24 seats, is offered on Mondays which is a conflict with the STEM club and may be the reason it’s not as full
* So happy to have the ball rolling with Essex-based after school activities!

**New Building Updates**

* Sheila shared that of the 63 schools who put their names in for getting funding, 23 got approved and Essex is one of them.
* The school budget and new principal timeline will both be discussed in the school council meeting this week.

**Remarks from Staff Member, Ms Dwyer**

* Ms. Dwyer added that the school admin will need to start talking to community members and initiate some information campaigns to get input from the public as well as form a Building Committee (this will be a really big group with local construction workers, parents, etc.)
* Re: Community Read - the book comes home with the youngest child next week, along with some papers that connect to SEL. Teachers will also likely be including some grade-level specific materials via weekly newsletters
* Thank you to Hilary M. who works all the time to get Enrichment programming going!
	+ Everyone is appreciative of her work with the Acton Discovery Museum for grades K, 1, 2
* Maggie Gleason asked Ms. Dywer to please encourage staff to use their stipends and send us photos so we can share on social media

**Approval of Minutes** - The minutes from our December meeting were approved.

**Grant Writing Update**

* Heather is going to pay Daisy Nell's remaining fee. The STARS grants funds of $3250 should come in in the next month. There is a Mass Cultural Council STARS grant info-session Jess will attend on 1/16 and she will get more information then.
* The New England Biolabs grant was funded for $1,500 for the Mass Audubon K-4 program (check arrived!). The program was budgeted for $1750, so Hilary M. will cover the difference with the Enrichment Budget.
* Jess also applied for another $1750 grant in October that we may get, no response yet. New England Biolabs response is below:
	+ T*he NEB Corporate Donations Committee has awarded your request in the amount of $1,500. This grant is for the Essex Elementary Naturalist in Residence Program as listed in your application. Teaching children about the natural areas in their own backyards is a step toward creating great future stewards of the Earth, and we are glad Essex Elementary students will have these experiences on their own campus.* *You should receive a check in the mail in the coming days to the address provided in your application. Please confirm receipt when it arrives.
	Please let us know how this program proceeds and send us a short report to corpdonations@neb.com once you have used the funds along with any other material you think might be useful. This is to help the committee determine how effective our funding practices are. The committee thanks you for your response. Please contact us if you have any questions or need more information.*
* The Spaulding Education Fund reached out to let her know they're opening their grant cycles. They will have rolling open grants for under $1000 and a formal grant cycle for asks over $1000. Not sure what you all might want me to apply for, happy to support the teachers for a school ask. It looks like the district staff may have to apply directly, so this may be more of an FYI for Sheila.
	+ Jess will forward the email over to her.
	+ Action Item: Jess will reach out to Shiela to schedule a meeting with select staff about how to set this up.
* Finally, the planned spring asks are:
	+ Cape Ann Community Foundation - to cover Messy Art Night
	+ Hooper Fund - Community Read 2024/2025

**Enrichment Update**

* Hilary emailed each grade level team a list of what they did last year for enrichment which seems to be a good system
* A lot of programs had discounts if you get signed up ahead of January 1st, but we missed the deadline for some things, not a big deal
* 4th grade - not doing Museum of Science trip again
* Recommends we skip the Author visit this year and instead use funds toward library overhaul. This might give the incoming principal a chance to refocus on how they want to do these moving forward.
	+ In the future, each school should do their own Author Visit as there are too many stars that need to align when we try to coordinate–difficult to pin down coordinating dates between the two schools ini a time-efficient manner.
* Hilary inquired about her master enrichment document and wondered what the best way to share this with staff in a manner that protects the privacy of students and their whereabouts (worried about including specific info/dates/where children are located)
	+ Hilary will work to come up with a solution and report back
* HIlary also confirmed that the $250 needed to cover Mass Audubon will come from enrichment budget

**Treasurer Update**

* Heather asked if there are any other field trips that need to be paid for and Hilary shared that most spring ones are still in the planning stages.
* Now that it is approved, Heather plans to put some of our reserve funds in a money market account.
* The Business appeal is doing really well ($250 over budget) → currently have $2750
* Family appeal also well (we budgeted for $2500 and we’re now at $2596)
	+ FYI - Using Paypal is way better for us (Venmo takes a fee)
	+ Betsy needs to change Venmo to a charity account and pass on to new treasurer (it needs to be tied to a cell phone)
* We received $297 from the restaurant night at CK Pearl
	+ The next one will be at 35 Beach or the new Italian place
* Our total income right now sits at $24,733 (Our budget predicted $46,000 but we are barely halfway through the year)
* We are waiting for grant funds to help pay us back on some things we’ve covered which will also balance some things out
* Office supplies are going over budget
* Insurance docs are in the Googlee drive
* We have used $2200 in staff stipends (we are budgeted for $5800)
* Total expenses are $4300, so we are netting income at about $20,000
* Heather will check to see if we can switch out Amazon account to a non-profit (65% off business price)
	+ Not sure if this is that different from the tax exempt one we currently have.

**Restaurant Night**

* Maggie will reach out to one of the other restaurants mentioned above (35 Beach or the new Italian place )
* Try to get one ahead of February break

**Flashlight Tag**

* Scheduled for 1/30 for 3rd, 4th, 5th graders
* Ideally some parents will stay to help (the FoEES Board will individually reach out to some parents and ask them to help).

**Collab with YMCA**

* Caitlin McShera shared that the Ipswich YMCA is interested in getting involved in some community building activities
* Possible involvement for a Movie Night? Or a Read-In? Perhaps offering kids a *movement* based activity if they can't sit through movie?
* Betsy suggested they help with childcare/cchild activities for the Essex based budget meeting on 1/23 at 6 pm at Essex Elementary
	+ Caitlin will float this date back to YMCA
	+ Betsy will touch base with Sheila after her meeting with Pam next week to hear more about the agenda for meeting (hoping to front load info at the beginning of meeting so parents can leave)

**Scholastic Book Fair Follow up**

* Maggie shared that she is waiting on Sheila to follow up with Sam Silag about how money should be divided between staff members (roughly $200 each if split evenly)
* Then a direct link will be sent to each staff member for them to shop for books
* There’s also tentative plans to host a Staff Classroom Library Grow in the spring (in lieu of a winter warm up)

**Polar Plunge Update**

* Thus far we have raised $400-500 (last year we made $1000)
* Last year police didn't charge us but it has been $260 in the past - Betsy will clarify that we don’t need a formal police detail this year.

**Square 1 Art fundraiser**

* Emily Dwyer suggested she float this to Ms. Yutkins as the school her children attend do this and seem very successful
* This could be a possible collaboration with Manchester Memorial, although they use a different company that doesn't seem to produce as nice a product for families

**Messy Art Night -** No updates

**Staff Appreciation Lunch** - The next one is schedule for March 12 (hosted by K-2)

**New Funding Requests:** None - Please tell staff to consider!

**STEM Night Update**

* Mandy shared an update on the district wide STEM Night that is happening on March 27th, currently slated for 5 - 7 pm
* Whale Mobile is booked..sad! Maybe we can add it to the enrichment budget and have it come in later in the spring to EES?

**Other fresh ideas**

* Mandy asked if we have ever sent out a parent survey to ask about things they'd like to see, feedback on events/meetings/etc. and we have not
* Mandy will put a mid-year survey together and circulate
* Perhaps we should plan a FoEES Meet and Greet? or include a “Meet the Board” handout at start of year with photos/bios so folks know who we are
* Sheila could add a “From the FoEES” section to her newsletter
* Sheila suggested we all start calling parents to help chaperone flashlight tag.

Maggie made a motion to adjourn at 9:13 and Betsy seconded.

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Next meeting: Thursday February 1st, 2024 at 7:30 pm in person and on Zoom.