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**Friends of Essex Elementary School Meeting Minutes**

**June 1, 2023 -- In-Person/Zoom meeting**

**Attendance:**

**In-person:** Betsy McKeen-President; Maggie Gleason - VP; Sheila McAdams - School Principal; Rachel McInnis-Social Media Coordinator; Heather Harrell - Treasurer; Bradley Cooke- Secretary; Mandy Beausoleil - Parent

**Via Zoom:** Jessica Torcicollo - Grant Writer; Hilary Mattison - Enrichment Coordinator; Beth Kelley - 1st grade teacher

**Welcome/Introductions:**

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

**Welcome/remarks from Mrs. McAdams (Playground Update and Last Day of School/Playground Celebration Update**

Mrs. McAdams shared that they will be adjusting dismissal procedures for field day and the last day of school in order to avoid confusion and any congestion like there was after the parade of balloons last November. The teachers and staff are working on a draft plan and there will be paperwork sent home ahead of time for parents to complete if they plan to sign out their child on the day of the event.

Sheila shared that the new name for the playground has been voted on and will now go before the School Committee next Tuesday before it is announced publicly.

The Rotary Club will be providing a Peace Pole for the playground. Since this will be cemented in, Sheila believes they will also be able to cement in the benches once they are assembled next week. Jason from facilities is also looking into whether there needs to be paving under the ADA compliant bench.

The plantings are mostly done at this point. Jason will follow up with Jefferies Creek regarding mulch; they gave an initial price of $400. Heather Harrell, FoEES Treasurer, will then confirm payment. We will send out a signupgenius to recruit volunteers for spreading the mulch once we have a drop date.

The resin board with photos of the old playground, which Sheila has described at our previous meeting, may not be ready for the opening ceremony, but Sheila assured us that it is still in the works. She also suggested that we keep money in the budget for future repairs, etc.

In addition to the DJ, Heather will reach out to the Kona Ice Truck based in Gloucester to see if they can be there for the last day of school playground celebration.

Finally, Betsy McKeen asked Sheila if FoEES could place our supplies, currently stored on stage, back in the modular. Sheila agreed that’s a better place, so FoEES Board members will plan to move things over ahead of one of our next meetings.

**Hello from Staff Member(s)**

Ms. Beth Kelley, first grade teacher, shared her thanks for a successful teacher appreciation week. The first grade loved having the “top secret science guy” come visit and would love for him to come again in the future.

Ms. Kelley shared that they are hoping to distribute the Community Read books in the fall so that they can be referenced throughout the year. Similar to last year, teachers are hoping to host a pre-Thanksgiving event involving families on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving. The book choice is currently “What Do You Do With a Problem” but may change to “The Bureau of Imagination.”

Ms. Kelley asked a question on behalf of Ms. Cucuru, “Are Kestrel and Maritime Gloucester programs under a different line for enrichment?” Hilary Mattison, Enrichment Coordinator, shared that we are waiting to hear about a grant which will fund these programs next year. She also noted that the Maritime program is only for grades 3-5. Heather will confirm whether a check was written to Kestrel Educational Adventures or not.

Maggie Gleason shared with Ms. Kelley that she has ordered everything that was on Kim Field’s request form.

**Approval of last meeting's minutes:** The minutes were approved.

**Field Day Planning - June 7**

Betsy McKeen shared that we need more parents to sign up to help with activity stations and watermelon prep, so we will reshare the signupgenius asap.

We have secured eight big watermelons from Katie Vandi at Meadowbrook Farm, and Betsy has $50 to spend at Market Basket to buy more. We are hoping for about 15 in total. Mrs. McAdams noted that the kitchen staff will be happy to assist in cutting watermelon if we do not get many more volunteers.

On the day of the event, kids will need to all have their own water bottles; we will likely set up the big yellow water jugs like last year as a refill station. We do not want to use cups.

**Kindergarten Playdate**

Rachel McInnis shared that the date will be Tuesday August 22nd in an effort to coordinate classroom tours for families. The timing is still TBD but likely a start time between 5:30 and 6 pm.

Jess Webb will be coordinating this with Rachel’s assistance.

Betsy has leftover water bottles and will give Jess and Rachel the final count soon. There are also a number of t-shirts / EES swag leftovers which can be sold at the playdate. Sheila recommended we create grab bags for sale with “golden tickets” inside that say “you get a water bottle or you get a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_” to help unload some of the other swag.

Betsy gave Sheila the handout for the Parent Directory as well as the FoEES info sheet, which will be distributed at all Kindergarten-centered events (screenings / playdate).

 **School Supplies Fundraiser Update**

Hilary Mattison shared that the fundraiser is happening again, and she is simply waiting on final lists from teachers. Sheila said they are looking for commonalities between supply requests as well as overall expenses of some items to make sure the money isn’t adding up to too much for families with multiple children.

Hilary shared that she has several volunteers queued up to help with shopping and organizing. We agreed that using Venmo or check is best. All purchases will be tax exempt.

Betsy is looking into converting our Venmo from a business account to nonprofit now that Venmo has this option. This should save us from additional fees.

**Christina Bruce Photography Fundraiser - August 28 - starting at 3 pm.**

Betsy is asking Christina to make a flier promoting this event. It will take place at Cox Reservation on Tuesday, August 28th, starting at 3 pm. Each session will be 15 minutes long. Christina told Betsy that she has a tentative rain date for Wednesday the 29th.

**Happy as a Clam Update**

Betsy shared that planning is underway and lots of checks are coming in from sponsors, including two new silver level sponsors (C.K. Pearl and Boyd Builders). Googans Galley has also shared that they will be contributing this year, most likely at the Silver level ($750) as well.

**Enrichment Update**

Hilary shared that two funding requests have come in recently. The first is from Mr. Marche for equipment for Field Day enhancements. The Board agreed that Mr. Marche’s request should be funded through Enrichment.

The other request is from the first grade tech requesting $326.65 worth of classroom learning center games. Betsy made a motion to vote in favor of supporting this as a funding request rather than through Enrichment. Maggie seconded this and the board agreed to fund the 1st grade’s request.

Hilary reiterated the new programs slated for next year: Gloucester Maritime and Mass Audubon. The maritime program will be for grades 3-5. Maritime applied for a grant to fund this and will let us know when/if it is approved. We may need to use some enrichment funding for buses as there will occasionally be on-site visits. We should hear about the Mass Audubon grant in August (see budget line items).

Finally, Hilary brought up an exciting opportunity to raise a Blanding’s turtle on campus for 9 months next year. Petco has a grant which may fund most of this but additional costs could include the $125 tank. Sheila confirmed that this would be a great addition to EES next year.

**Grant Writer’s Update**

Jess Torcicollo shared that we missed the Hooper Fund Grant application deadline as it changed since last year. She will hear back from the Institution for Savings grant in June. She is currently on the hunt for different Community Read funding as back up, but since it is so fundable, she is confident we will find something.

Cape Ann Savings won’t fund PTO based projects, but Sheila recommended reaching out to M&T as they sent her something recently. Jess plans to reach out. Heather suggested Brookline Bank, however Jess noted that their grant program is very specific and we are not within their funding guidelines.

Betsy shared that the BB Botanicals, which just opened in Essex, is supposed to donate $5000 of community impact funds to FofEES on a yearly basis. She will follow up about this now that they have officially opened. She also shared that while the Spaulding Educational Fund fell out of existence during Covid, community members have mentioned intent to bring this back.

Jess shared that the Cell Signaling grant comes back in August and in November she will apply to New England Biolabs to potentially fund up to $2000 of the Mass Audubon program.

We discussed funding for the two large music enrichment programs (Daisy Nell and Composer in Residence / Guest Arts Instructor) and agreed to pursue grant funding for both programs, prioritizing the Daisy Nell program as it benefits the entire school community. Ms. Kelley suggested that if we pursue the Guest Arts Instructor program that this would tie nicely with one of the Community Read book choices. By looping in the Community Read component this may make Jess’s grant request seem more appealing as its impact will be on the entire EES community.

**Treasurer’s Update**

Heather placed the order for Ms. Jordan’s new rug, and it has arrived. All teacher stipend requests are done except for one. Ms. Seymour asked for books a while ago but the link had expired so we cannot place the order just yet. Maggie Gleason asks that the link be re-sent. Emily Dwyer’s book also came in.

Field Trips have all been paid for and the playground furniture has arrived and will be assembled next week. Finally, Heather has spoken with Jeff Solard and confirmed he completed the 990 Form he does for us every year.

**Vote on Budget for FY 2024**

Heather Harrell, Treasurer, walked us through the budget which was built based on this year’s income streams, donations, and expenses.

While running through the income budget lines, it was noted that we need to write a check back to Ms. Silag for the book fair money. Maggie Gleason will reach out to confirm to whom the check should be written.

New to this upcoming school year, FoEES has adjusted the budget to give $200 to every full time staff member, including specialists (there are 29 in total).

Betsy made a motion to amend the wording on the income operation budget and change “Composer in Residence” to “Guest Arts Instructor.” Maggie seconded, and the Board approved. Maggie made a motion to change “STAR ME Council” to “STARS Mass Cultural Council.” Betsy seconded and the Board approved.

Betsy made a motion to approve the amended budget and Maggie seconded. The Board approved the amended Budget for FY 2024.

**Vote on Positions to be filled for 2023-2024**

Betsy nominated Mandy Beausoleil for co-president for the 2023-24 school year. Maggie seconded nomination, and the Board voted in favor.

Heather requested that board members revisit the FoEES onboarding training powerpoint in the Google drive, so that every position has a detailed explanation of responsibilities and time commitments.

**Teacher stipend fulfillments update**

Ms. Field’s stipend was filled this year.

**New funding requests**

The request from 1st grade for $326 worth of classroom games was approved earlier in the meeting.

**Business appeals / FoEES Mail**

A business appeal from Crocker’s for $1000 arrived. We also received a check from BoxTops and a very thoughtful thank you card from the 4th graders for their Museum of Science field trip.

Maggie made a motion to adjourn at 9:16 and Rachel seconded.