

Friends of EES

Friends of Essex Elementary School Meeting Minutes May 4, 2023 -- In-Person/Zoom meeting

Attendance:

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

Via Zoom: Jessica Torcicollo - Grant Writer; Hilary Mattison - Enrichment Coordinator; Beth Kelley - 1st grade teacher; Amanda DesRosiers - 3rd grade parent

Welcome/Introductions:

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

Welcome/remarks from Mrs. McAdams

Mrs. McAdams shared that there are many calendar events in May and June, including quite a few field trips and the Memorial Day celebrations. All events are noted on the calendar that was sent out to families.

Field Day will be on June 7th and it will be a half day. Sheila shared that the school will be looking for parent volunteers to help with some extra activities that day.

Finally, she shared that there will be a survey going out to teachers and 3,4,5 families seeking feedback on their experience at EES thus far.

Hello from Staff Member, Beth Kelley

Beth Kelley shared that teacher Kim Field was very appreciative of the Museum of Science field trip. She also asked if she has used up all of her stipend money. Maggie Gleason plans to follow up directly with Kim.

The 1st grade said "Thank you" as well for their funded trip to Maritime Gloucester. Beth also thanked FoEES for the March Madness books which have arrived.

She reported that Samantha Silag shared with her that Laura Campbell and Jess Webb will be the new chairs of the Book Fair. Ms. Silag also has an author visit with Rajani Larocca in the works for next year. Mrs. McAdams noted that this will be at district cost and will not need funding through FoEES since it will be a curriculum-focused and district wide experience. Beth also said that Ms. Silag has started to think about the Summer Reading Challenge. Betsy McKeen asked that Ms. Silag submit a funding request once she knows how much money she needs for additional prizes.

Approval of last meeting's minutes

Our April meeting minutes were approved.

Playground planning and timeline

The plants arrived early which kicks up the planting schedule. Ms. McAdams shared that next week the facilities crew will do prep work, refresh soil/ pull up mulch, etc. in preparation for planting week, May 15-19.

Sheila plans to send out invitations for several community nights (3 - 5pm ..ish) during planting week so that families can participate as well. She hopes to coordinate invites with the grade levels using the soccer field those evenings. Nate Boyd also plans to help set up the benches currently down in storage.

The goal is for all the “stuff” to be in by Memorial Day Weekend. The current plan is to host a celebration on the last day of school (Thursday, June 15th). Sheila hopes to have a DJ and hopefully have a mural ready to be painted by the community to be hung on the wall facing the new playground.

It was suggested that we ask families to pack a picnic lunch to appease hungry kids at the midday mark. Sheila would also like to look into handing out some kind of treats (cake, popsicles, watermelon, TBD)

As for naming the new playground, Sheila plans to have staff brainstorm ideas, then have classes vote on a narrowed down pool of names. Pictures of the Eagles Nest playground have been collected and will be placed in a resin display. This will be placed near the current name plate. A new plaque with the new name will then be ordered to be placed near the new structure. Sheila hopes this can all be funded from the amount set aside for the playground.

Betsy McKeen offered to reach out to the DJ we used for Happy as a Clam to see if he is available that day from 10:30-12:30.

Rachel McInnis also suggested we should talk to Dan Meyer to help with mulch. Sheila noted this would need to be donated time and not through his business. Rachel shared that he is probably most interested in helping with the clean up before the planting.

Enrichment Update

Hilary Mattison shared a document with the breakdown of each grade's enrichment budget this year. To date, \$8,289 of the \$9000 budget has been used.

Hilary noted that the 4th grade MOS field trip was made possible this year due to our bus credit. This credit allowed the cost to remain \$8/head. She cautioned that if we want this trip to become a regular thing for 4th grade, we will need to account for this in next year's budget as the bus alone was very expensive.

Hilary is waiting to hear back from Gloucester Maritime for their free grades 3-5 program next year. She shared that there *may* be some cost involved for bussing several times to the actual site in which case we may want to look at applying for a grant to fund this.

Grant Writer's Update

Jessica Torricollo submitted a Cell Signaling grant for \$10,000 this past Sunday. She thinks this grant is probably best to put towards the Mass Audubon program Hilary shared last meeting. She also plans to apply for the Stars Grant in the fall (unless anyone else in school is already applying to that one).

With Cell Signaling already contributing so much funding to Change is Simple, Jess suggested we not try to use this grant toward the CIS program next year. Sheila reminded us that CIS will likely be a district wide program that is funded directly through Cell Signaling next year since they now have offices in Manchester and wish to be more heavily involved in the community.

Jess shared that the New England Biolabs grant is another possibility to keep in our back pocket as she can apply to this in August if need be.

The other grants Jess has on her docket include: Hooper Fund for Community Read and Cape Ann Community Foundation for Composer in Residence / Daisy Nell (both due May 15)

Jess is also on the mailing list for Mass Cultural Council and there's a grant that might be good for Messy Art Night. Thus far, nothing has come up for the Yellow School Bus grant.

Maggie Gleason asked about using a Spaulding Grant as this was something FoEES used to rely on many years ago, and Jess says she will do some research on this as well.

Treasurer's Update

Heather Harrell emailed us her update (pasted below).

1. Ms. Jordan looked at all of the options of classroom rugs that I sent her (Thank you Hilary and Mandy Beausoleil) and asked for either 12X10 \$593 or 7'6" x 12 \$290 with preference being the bigger rug. I have a link if needed.
2. North Creek Nurseries will be delivering the playground trees/bushes any day now- total was \$2,869
3. 2 teacher stipend requests:
 1. Ms Russo- seeds and potting soil \$30.45
 2. Ms Denman- \$200 for books
4. I attached the P&L report
 1. we are under budget for expenses by \$4902
 2. we are over budget for income by \$9,958
 3. actuals are in the drive
5. When all was said and done the book fair gave us \$1,278 and we budgeted for \$1200! YAY!

STEM Night Recap

This was really well attended, but a note for next year is to order a bit less food for the vendors. There was lots of extra chowder and a full tray of cookies left over. The sandwich number was good.

A photo of the Buckley children with the Whale Mobile was taken and was sent along with a thank you note to Denise Jacobson for her generous gift in honor of Brad Buckley.

Restaurant Night Recap

The Farm Restaurant Night from last month raised \$181.

Staff Appreciation Week Planning

Amanda DesRosiers and Hilary Mattison have got this underway. The sign-up genius is filled up a lot more after Maggie Safrine's last reminder. Amanda plans to draft another reminder to send tomorrow. She will also draft a targeted email for 2nd and 3rd grade parents since they did not host a teacher appreciation luncheon this year.

The flowers for next week are going to be donated by Trader Joes and DesRosiers and Tierney LLC will be donating funds to help cover the flowers as well.

There was an interest in chair massages on one of the days, so Amanda is also reaching out to a few practitioners.

Maggie Gleason noted that the Yoga Class that her step-mother hosted last year will be back next year.

Field Day Planning

Betsy McKeen reached out to Gloucester Market Basket to see if we can get 25 watermelons for Field Day. If they say no, we can approach a local place like Meadowbrook and/or Crosby's Market.

We will need to make a Signup Genius for Field Day to recruit parents to assist with watermelon prep/serving and the additional activities Sheila mentioned above.

School Supply Fundraiser

Hilary thinks she has a team of four ready to take this on. They are focusing on 1. Bringing costs down, 2. Giving teachers a hard deadline for their lists, and 3. Streamlining the list-sharing process so that it only comes from ONE source (directly from Maggie Safrine)

Hilary also plans to send out a Google survey to teachers that will populate a spreadsheet.

Family Directory Planning for Summer 2023

Betsy McKeen asked that we add a flier for the Family Directory as well as a 1 pager for the Friends of EES to go inside the Kindergarten welcome packets distributed during screening.

New fundraiser w/ Christina Bruce

Betsy reached out to Christina to check in on the August 28th photography event. She will report back when she knows more.

Kindergarten Tour

Sheila McAdams brought up the idea of inviting new kindergarten families to take a tour of the school with a CURRENT kindergarten child and parent. This will be a nice way to bring in new families and hear about EES and see the classrooms before the school year gets underway. Sheila has already mentioned this to K teachers and asked that they recommend a few current students who would be great tour guides.

Family and Business Appeal Update

Wolf Hill Garden Center sent us a gift card for \$50 which is for the teacher raffle next week. Maggie Gleason will leave this for Amanda in the PTO box.

Open/Filled Board Positions and Event Chairs for 2023-2024

We hope to have an election for co-positions highlighted below during our June Meeting.

- 1. President - Betsy McKeen PLUS ? Co-President**
- 2. Vice President - Maggie Gleason PLUS ? Co-VP**
- 3. Secretary - Bradley Cooke**
- 4. Treasurer - Heather Harrell PLUS ? Co-Treasurer**
- 5. Social Media Coordinator - Rachel McInnis**
- 6. Grant Writer - Jessica Torcicollo**
- 7. Enrichment - Hilary Mattison**
- 8. Kindergarten Playdate - Jess Webb**
- 9. First Day Coffee - Betsy McKeen and Rachel McInnis**
- 10. Happy as a Clam - Betsy McKeen, Mackenzie Poulos, Jenna Morris, Sarah O'Connor**
- 11. Hoe Down - Lisa Shotwell**
- 12. Messy Art Night - Elle Woulfe**
- 13. Polar Plunge - Betsy McKeen**
- 14. Book Fair - Laura Campbell and Jess Webb**
- 15. STEM Night - OPEN**
- 16. Community Read - may not need to be filled**
- 17. Teacher Appreciation Lunch Coordinator - Amanda Desrosiers**
- 18. Teacher Appreciation Week - Hilary Mattison and Amanda Desrosiers**
- 19. Family Directory - Betsy McKeen**

Teacher stipend fulfillments update

The school nurse received her \$90 bulletin board today.

Betsy updated the staff link on FoEES website to include a 3rd option where teachers can request that FoEES purchase an item for them, and Leslie Denman (Special Ed) is the first to use this new option. She would like to order 4 specialty books (\$200 total) which FoEES is happy to fund.

Next year FoEES would like to make sure the budget accounts for giving ALL staff members a \$200 stipend.

We need to circle back with Ms. Jordan regarding her rug selection. Her preference is mentioned above in the Treasury Update.

School Budget Vote

Annie Cameron, as former Chair of the school committee, asked Betsy McKeen to deliver the following message on her behalf.

“...we need 3x more Yes votes than showed up at town meeting...we had 250 Yes at the meeting, but will need 800 Yes at the ballot.

- The town benefited from the use of MERSD reserves to keep our assessment lower. We have to end that practice.
- Retaining our reserves keeps Essex Elementary open and functioning until we can afford to renovate or rebuild.
- Please use social media and email to get out the vote!”

Maggie Gleason motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:50 pm and Betsy seconded.

Next meeting: Thursday June 1, 2023 at 7:30 pm in person and on Zoom.