

Friends of EES

Friends of Essex Elementary School Meeting Minutes September 13, 2021 -- Zoom meeting

Attendance: Zoom meeting (Betsy McKeen, Maggie Gleason, Suzanne Bediz, Heather Harrell, Elisa Peyla, Dr. Roberts, Amanda Dix, Letizia Donati, Katie Dale, Megan Sudbay, Catey Cavender, Teri Morris, Jamie Panagoplos, Richard Carpenter, Allison Willard, Brandy Markey)

Welcome/Introductions:

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

Welcome/remarks from Dr. Roberts:

Welcome to new folks and new children to EES. Thank you to Mr. Carpenter for attending the meeting. Great opening, the kids are happy to be back in school and not Zooming. There is some semblance of normalcy, new friends are being made. New Kindergarteners and ½ of first grade is new. Today the school reviewed expected and unexpected behaviors in the building (bathrooms, hallways, cafeteria, office).

Playground expected behaviors are waiting on signage from the company. Merry-go-round will have a limit on the number of students. The structure is completed but the playground is still unfinished (walkways, landscaping, etc.). The ribbon-cutting/ceremony will probably be in October but this will happen when the project is completed.

Logistics of dismissal are still being worked out; more parents are on foot (on the lawn), there is more traffic in the hallways. This is continuing to be worked on.

The shrubbery in the front of the school was overgrown. It was pulled out and will be replaced this year (looking for some support from Friends of EES, Student Council). Dr. Roberts will reach out with more details at the next meeting (manpower, fundraising, manage kids' participation).

Dr. Roberts has a blog, which includes photos and brief descriptions of activities in the school. There is a link for a subscription to the blog on the Friends of EES website.

2020-2021 Calendar review - meetings and events:

Events are still tentative!

- Welcome Back night - will not occur in 2021
- Happy as a Clam 5k (9/17/21)
- Curriculum Night / Open House (decision will be made at end of September by administration)
- Hoedown (could it be outside? Guidelines are around indoor activities - definite NO inside; weather dependent if outdoors, perhaps wait one more year)

- New idea from the Peyla family: Station Carnival (parents manage each booth) - tickets for each activity; everyone to participate -- think about a Fall or Spring Carnival -- The Peylas will think more about this and will let us know what they need, and whether we make it happen in the Fall? Spring?
- Messy Art Night (possible outdoor in spring)
- New idea: Calendar for gift drive (with advertisers similar to what is done by the MERSD cheerleading program. Jamie P will look into this and will speak with Mrs. Yutkins).

Courtyard Table condition / Funding Request from Ms. Jordan

The picnic tables in the courtyard are in disrepair. There are currently four tables (2 adult-size tables/2 small child-size tables). The adult-sized tables are repairable. The 2 adult tables are wooden and would continue to remain outdoors year-round. Mrs. Jordan is hoping the FoEES would fund improved outdoor seating since the courtyard is being used frequently for outdoor class activities. Dr. Roberts endorses the small plastic chairs. In order to proceed with this request, we would need to research the options and find costs. A final funding request would need to be submitted. Dr. Roberts will reach out to Jason S. (facilities manager) to find information about the tables outside in front, which are heavier and more durable. Heather Harrell has volunteered to check on the cost of the chairs. Maggie Gleason will email Ms. Jordan to let her know the status of this funding request (researching options and costs).

Samantha Silag - set up meeting:

Ms. Silag would like to meet with the group to discuss opportunities for the library such as author visits, the book fair, etc. She would like to determine roles and understand the differences from MMES options. She has used her stipend for 2021-2022. Maggie Gleason will invite her to the upcoming October FoEES meeting.

Kindergarten Playdate Update:

Fifteen families participated (out of 32 students in K). Adults were mingling. FoEES handed out water bottles (cost \$120 approx. for 50). Jenna Morris helped Maggie Gleason and the event was a great success!

Happy As A Clam Update:

The website looks amazing! New timing company, new software. No balloon arch this year. There will be a DJ. There is no food at the race because there will be a post-race party at Great Marsh for food and drinks. There were more expenses this year (more shirts), volunteer t-shirts (15-20); and the event still needs some volunteers (need someone to be Shucky costume), and possibly include a Family Directory flyer to kids/families.

The Happy as a Clam registration site has brought in additional donations from families and others in the community of about \$1600.

Family Directory Update:

Our Family Directory is based on a Google Form that creates an accessible spreadsheet. There is currently just over 50% of the families listed in the directory. We will need to advertise this again!

Maggie will send it out after the race. If there are extra volunteers, they will distribute flyers at the HAAC race if possible.

Family and Business Appeal Planning:

There are two appeals: Family (money or time), and business. The business appeal stalled during covid (typically was sent out in the fall) which is based on the Fiscal Year (FY) cycle. We try to target the end of FY which typically is December, but some businesses do use the end of June. We could also look at quarterly incomes -- maybe we need to send out the business appeal more often.

We will target the end of October 2021 for a new business appeal letter. In October 2019, more money was raised with the family appeal than the business appeal.

Any money coming into support enrichment is good, but how to ask during current situations? We need to be mindful. Are there ways to appeal to the generational aspect of Essex such as the Council on Aging? To be discussed further at the October meeting.

EES Gear Sale:

Jungle, Inc. is the screen printing service in Essex and has a variety of items that are branded/non-branded. Funds are raised from the sale by adding a dollar amount to the price of the item. We will plan to re-open the store after the HAAC is over. The Sale will run for about 2 weeks (have to close to ensure stock). Shipping fees can be somewhat avoided by having one large shipment to Friends of EES and distributing from there. We will plan to have both kids' and adults' sizes. We could possibly order extra gear and have it to sell at other events over the year (K Playdate, etc.).

Book Fair 2022:

The Book Shop of Beverly Farms (Hannah Harlowe) ran the Book Fair in spring 2021 which was a successful virtual Book Fair (website order). The book choices were better than past companies that were used by the PTO. If we go back to the in-person Fair, we would like to use local business rather than Scholastic. Dr. Roberts supports the virtual platform for now for this school year. We could think about a way to involve kids more in the fair besides shopping. Maggie is meeting with Hannah on Friday and will aim to schedule a fair for March 2022.

Enrichment Update:

A new opportunity from the Shalin Liu / Friends of the M-E Performing Arts (who will work with school admin) has presented itself. Rockport SD is working with Shalin Liu; they are wondering if EES (and Friends of EES) could collaborate with Shalin Liu. Mr. Carpenter and Mrs. O'Leary could look into this and will connect with the Shalin Liu Education Director. FoEES and EES staff needs more information about the specific programs that they are offering, and how it will connect to the current curriculum. Letizia will forward relevant information to Richard Carpenter.

As an additional note, there will not be a Symphony trip this year.

Elections (open positions - Treasurer / Social Media Coordinator):

Treasurer: Michelle Dyer regretfully resigned in August, effective September 9, 2021. Betsy nominated Heather Harrell. There were no other nominations. 6 yes votes; 0 nays. Heather has been elected to the position of Treasurer unanimously.

Social Media Coordinator: Letizia has nominated Elisa as a possible candidate. She is interested but would like to meet with members of the board prior to an election next month.

New Funding Requests:

There was a request from Mr. Carpenter for Daisy Nell's grade 2 curriculum unit on folk songs. Each class will write and perform their song to a smaller audience. Letizia Donati and Maggie Gleason will look into whether this can be funded through the existing enrichment budget or whether it should be a new funding request.

Ms. Dooley did apply to the Hooper Fund last school year; the additional surplus funds (about \$800 from 2020) can be applied to the Grade 5 Composer in Residence program. FoEES will need to research grants to determine a funding source for the additional \$400 needed for Greg.

Teacher Stipends are provided for each classroom teacher and full-time staff. Classroom teachers receive \$100 for books to purchase for their classrooms. There is an additional \$100 for reimbursement of teacher purchases. The complete list of positions that are provided the \$100 materials stipend can be provided by the FoEES.

Approval of Prior Meeting minutes:

The minutes from the June 2021 EES PTO meeting were approved.

Next meeting: October 4, 2021 at 7:30 pm (Zoom meeting)

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Suzanne Bediz and seconded by Maggie Gleason. The meeting was adjourned at 9:22 pm.