****

**Friends of Essex Elementary School Meeting Minutes**

**September 8, 2022 -- In-Person/Zoom meeting**

**Attendance:**

**In-person:** Betsy McKeen-President, Rachel McInnis-Social Media Coordinator; Maggie Gleason-Vice President, Heather Harrell-Treasurer; Laura Eurich, Sheila McAdams- Principal

**Via Zoom:** Jessica Webb, Violet Hannah, AnneMarie Lucas, John Skiba, Beth Kelley, Samantha Silag, Jessica ByBee, Rich Carpenter

**Welcome/Introductions:**

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

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

We’ve had a great start, lots of smiles, and anticipate a tiring week. Kids are so happy to be back to a normal start without masks!

Open House – 6-7 pm on 9/22/22 will be done differently this year. Will be a true open house with the kids showing their school to us, their families. Families can truly see the whole building and come and go as they wish. Teachers and Staff will be available for questions as well!

Question from Maggie G – re: dismissal. How is it different this year? → Children are not being held in the cafeteria in order to avoid having to be kept quiet. They are also not being told a specific car number. Thought is to give the kids some empowerment to find their own cars. Ms. McAdams acknowledges that it will take some time to streamline the process but is already going better.

Another parent question was re: the bus routes and schedule. Kids are arriving to school late and have a long ride. Ms. McAdams is aware and the issues have been reported to Salter. There has been a reduction in the number of bus routes and area construction has made everything slower. The school doesn’t get to tell Salter how to manage things directly, but dissatisfaction has been communicated and it’s being worked on. Kids ARE held in the classroom until the bus arrives at the end of the day.

**Approval of prior meeting’s minutes:**

The June 2022 meeting minutes were approved by Betsy McKeen and Maggie Gleason, with a few minor grammatical corrections.

**Welcome/remarks from Mr. Skiba, 5th Grade Teacher:**

Mr. Skiba reports that fundraising for 5th grade WILL happen this year, in order to ensure that end-of-year events can occur. There are several fundraising ideas in play, including bringing back the ice cream social in the spring.

Mr. Skiba stated that in terms of MCBA book titles purchased in the past for 4th and 5th grade classrooms by FoEES, he feels that these are valuable additions to the school library. Ms. Silag, also in attendance at tonight’s meeting, stated that the MCBA books may not be a necessary addition to the 4th and 5th grade classrooms since they are purchased for the library anyway. Caitlin Featherstone was consulted by Ms. Silag – only 1 student voted last year in the traditional MCBA book challenge.

After some discussion, Betsy McKeen requested that the 4th and 5th grade staff meet offline w/ Ms. Silag to come up with consensus; the 4th and 5th grade teachers are then encouraged to submit a funding proposal for new and updated classroom book titles (which may or may not include MCBA). This funding proposal could be considered and voted upon at our October FoEES meeting.

**Staff Stipend Clarification:**

For the past 5-7 years, FoEES has granted $200 to classroom teachers ($100 for classroom enhancements and $100 for books), and $100 to full time support staff. Ms. Sartell from WING and Ms. Costa from ACE have reached out to see which category they fall into. Ms. McAdams clarified that they count as classroom teachers.

The FoEES Board then discussed that our goal will be to increase staff stipends next year (2023-2024) and that we will start setting funds aside THIS school year in preparation for that.

**Playground Update:**

Ms. McAdams would like clearance to go ahead and order things such as benches and tables, etc. FoEES reviewed that the funds have been approved for these types of playground enhancements up to approximately $35,000 and that the district will be reimbursed for each item as it is purchased.

**School Supplies Fundraiser Recap:**

Hilary Mattison reports that this went very well and proceeds were just over $2000. She would love feedback for future years on whether classroom teachers like the desk pets/erasers.

**Enrichment Update:**

There is a request to approve $532 for K to go to Smolak Farms. This covers a hayride tour and snack for 34 kids, 4 teachers, 4 chaperones. It does not cover bus or lunch (by parents). They have their entire budget of $1000 so it's within budget. Smolak will need a Purchase Order or a Deposit: contact is 978-687-4029 for Education.

Betsy made a motion to approve the K field trip to Smolak. Maggie seconded. The motion passed.

There is a request to approve moving forwards with Victoria Jameison for an Author Visit however exact costs are not yet determined. Hilary is in discussion with MMES PTO, and they have confirmed wanting to use her, but not confirmed using two of the three lectures based on Ms Silag's recommendation due to their larger size. Date is likely October 14; $2500 is the total cost for both schools. Budget for EES= $300 for Library and $1500 for all-school. Jess Torcicollo was also looking for grants. Assumed cost $850 for one lecture. The goal would be to have the kids at EES and MMES have the same experience.

There may be an excellent free opportunity for an author visit for K-2. Details to come.

A special note of thanks to Letizia Donati for information to update the website with past activities, update draft is complete.

Hilary also noted that the PTO at Cutler mentioned doing three tiers of author visits which seems nice to consider for another year: Grade 4/5 as more of a writing workshop, a 2/3 and a K/1. It seems they usually do it with 1-2 authors.

There is a proposal from staff about Change is Simple programming. To continue to have Change is Simple come into the school, an additional $6,500 (approximate) funding is needed. Friends of EES cannot cover this unfortunately so we are working hard to find grant funding. Jessica Torcicollo is looking at grants from Mass Cultural Council Grant or Cell Signaling (see discussion below)

$300 credit from Salter is available and will try to use this for the 3rd grade transportation-only field trip.

**Grant Writer Update:**

Jessica Torcicolllo sent a report in from home:

The check from our awarded Cell Signaling grant should have arrived, confirm if possible.

There has still been no word from Cape Ann Savings Bank re: Daisy Nell grant application. Jessica followed up but is still waiting. I asked that this funding be ongoing, but hope for at least one-time funding.

Jessica plans to ask ECC, MEPA, Manchester-Essex Rotary for the Author Visits or Composer in Residence. Samantha Silag received funding from Rotary for library books, so unsure if FoEES should ask there again. There is also a Cape Ann Community Foundation grant due March/April that could fund something at the end of the year.

Jessica has been doing research regarding new grant opportunities for the author visits, but finding new opportunities is slow going. She is not sure that she will be able to definitely secure alternative funding for this school year if the three planned asks do not pan out.

Sheila McAdams wanted to be sure that Jessica is aware of the Yellow School Bus Grant from Arbella Insurance - we will let Jessica know.

**Daisy Nell Curriculum/Hoedown Update:**

Jess Torcicollo reported that she has been working since the spring to secure funding in an ongoing way for the 2nd Grade Daisy Nell Curriculum through a grant she applied for from Cape Ann Savings Bank (see above). Unfortunately we have not received a response. Mr. Carpenter reports that if the program is going to happen, it will need to start soon. We made plans to check again with Cape Ann Savings Bank on when they will have the grant decision made.

**Treasurer Update**

For staff, please cash reimbursement checks ASAP

Hooper fund grant is in and deposited

Waiting for check from CST

School supply fundraiser – made $2000

**Kindergarten Playdate Wrap-Up**

Rachel McInnis reports that the Kindergarten Playdate in August went very well; highly attended. The rest of our “Essex Elementary” water bottles were given out as well as some books. We had EES gear (t-shirts, sweatshirts) for sale which were a hit but there was a request for more pink and purple colors.

**First Day Coffee Wrap-Up**

Betsy McKeen reports that this went well. Wonderful to have our new principal outside with us greeting families. Lots of new families stopped by to say hello, although almost none of the food and coffee was consumed. The excess was brought into the Staff Lounge.

**Happy as a Clam Update:**

Betsy McKeen reports that the race is 8 days away and planning is going well. The big need at this point is more high school volunteers and she is working with Laurie Carlson at the MERSD High School. There was a suggestion to reach out to Essex Tech as well to see if any of their students need volunteer hours. Proceeds are on track to exceed previous years due to increased business sponsorships.

**Messy Art Night Planning:**

Jade Gideon and Natasha Taylor have agreed to lead this event again, with help from additional parents if possible. Planning for a possible November date.

**Book Fair Planning:**

This year, we are looking at doing two Book Fairs. The first would be a Scholastic Book Fair in November, hopefully coinciding with Messy Art Night, and the second would be with the Book Shop of Beverly Farms in the Spring (see calendar planning discussion.)

We will need to identify a new parent to be the point person for Friends of EES, as Maggie Gleason is not able to continue to take this on in addition to her VP duties.

**Family Directory Update:**

Betsy McKeen reports that the Family Directory is coming along. About ½ of families have submitted their information. We will continue to advertise this and will plan to have a table at Open House on 9/22.

**Calendar Planning**

We discussed potential dates for upcoming events this school year. These \*tentative\* dates are as follows:

–Hoedown - Friday, October 18

–Messy Art Night and Fall Book Fair - Friday, November 18

–Community Read Day - late November, date needs to be clarified

–Teacher Appreciation lunches - November (perhaps Nov 9, half day for conferences), March, May

–Polar Plunge - Saturday, January 6

–Restaurant NIghts - TBD, throughout the year

–STEM Night - March 17 vs April 7. Discussed pros and cons of March vs April.

–Spring Book Fair - Wed-Fri March 29-31 (would be more desirable to have it later in the spring but difficult due to MCAS dates)

–Teacher Appreciation Week - May 1-5

**Family and Business Appeal Planning:**

We will plan to send out a business appeal in October this year. This would be the second ask this year, as we did send a mailing in the spring. We will create two letters - one for businesses that already donated, and one for those that have not yet donated. We will plan to send out an electronic and paper family appeal shortly after that later in october.

**New Funding Requests:**

There were no new funding requests.

Maggie Gleason made a motion to adjourn, and Betsy McKeen seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 pm.

**Next meeting: Thursday Oct 6, 2022 at 7:30 pm in person and on Zoom.**