

**Ridgewood High School Home & School Association**  
**Meeting Minutes for October 10, 2016**

**In Attendance:** L. McCarthy, L. Barclay, H. Dolan, T. Gorman, L. Hannafey, J. Nyhuis, B. Pizzuto, N. Richards, V. Sharo, K. Yates, T. Callahan, K. Perlman, E. Mannion, L. Weil, M. Dunphey, K. McCarthy, C. Dunican, K. Schultz, M. Crowe, M. Kirtane, R. Parks, A. Testa, J. Dawkins, N. Durso, A. Olsen, J. Cheng, K. Gioia, C. Brigante, M. Chhabra, J. Schnell, A. Alvarado, N. Friedman, S. Caswell, S. Eppley, B. Clay, D. Calvetti, A. Swanson, J. Hamlet, T. Taylor, T. Anzano, S. Tsapatsaris, M. Tagliabue, J. Lira, T. Doyle, A. Kumar, N. Tram, C. Stillwagon, L. Chamberlain-Anjero, M. Saltalamacchia, M. Cox, T. McCarthy, L. Jacoby.

**Call to Order:** Liz McCarthy called the meeting to order at 7:35 pm. Meeting agenda was made available and attendees were reminded to sign in.

**Approval of June Minutes:** A motion to approve the June meeting minutes was made by Lori Weil and seconded by Lisa Jacoby. The meeting minutes were unanimously approved.

**Class Reports:**

**PG17: Tara Callaghan & Kyra Perlman**

The majority of chair positions have been filled. There was a good turnout for the first design meeting. The co-chairs have appointed a project manager to oversee construction. Biggest need: a space for building from 3/1 to 7/1/17. If anyone knows of a space, please email TC. PG17 is fully insured and will pay utilities. Current fundraiser is a banner sale; banners can be customized with any graduation year. A parent social will take place this Saturday (not a fundraiser). Fashion show is scheduled for 4/2/17; committee will meet next week.

**Junior Class (Class of 2018): Erin Mannion & Lori Weil**

Current fundraiser is sale of Vineyard Vines custom items including a belt, men's Shep Shirt, and women's fleece vest. All items are customized with an "R" for Ridgewood. Order forms available; deadline is Saturday 10/15/16.

**Upcoming events for Class of 2018:**

- Thursday 11/17/16 from 7-9 pm: Fundraiser/Social wine & cheese at Backyard Living. The store will donate a portion of their proceeds to the Class of 2018.
- Spring 2017: Social for parents to get to know each other. They hope to have it at a private home. Please contact class reps if anyone is interested in hosting.
- January 5, 2017: Junior Parent Meeting: discussion of college application/search process; opportunity to sign up for helping at senior events including fashion show, graduation day ushers, graduation reception on lawn for senior parents, watchdog committee for PG at BF, wrecking ball committee to clean up after PG. This is a great way to learn how senior year events unfold.

**Sophomore Class (Class of 2019): Megan Dunphey & Karen McCarthy**

A fundraiser is being planned, possibly an umbrella, details to follow. Sophomore parent social will be 1/27/17 at Park West Loft.

**Freshman Class (Class of 2020): Christina Dunican & Kristen Schultz**

A parent coffee was held a few weeks ago with a good turnout. Many new families came. Freshman class Facebook page is set up. They are working on a fundraiser, details to follow. They are planning a parent social event for January.

**Student Liaison Report: Michael Crowe**

Students are getting back into the swing of school; they had a good start. Freshmen are getting acclimated to high school and seniors are applying to colleges. A goal this year is to increase school spirit and student participation in school events. They hope to encourage students to attend different events together, such as sporting events, art exhibits, and New Players productions. The students are looking into a school mascot. Discussion question: what is a "maroon?"

**Principal's Report: Tom Gorman**

School is off to a good start. Welcome to new people. Board of Education is currently voting to approve new teacher contract; everyone is glad to have this issue resolved.

Four student trips are planned for this academic year:

- Students taking Chinese will travel to China over February break.
- World Challenge Trip to Ecuador will be after graduation.
- Cambodia Club will travel to Cambodia over April break.
- Tentative trip to Italy over April break (not definite yet).

Alumni Association and H.S.A. will be planning a celebration of the 125<sup>th</sup> year of RHS. Details to follow

**Assistant Principal's Report: Basil Pizzuto**

Thanks to Annette Testa for organizing Food Trucks for the first day of school – kids enjoyed this event. Freshman back-to-school barbeque was well attended with about 225 students. Club Fair went well the first Friday of school.

New this year: outside doors will be locked during the school day. Students will receive access cards to go in and out of school during class hours. Visitors will need to enter at the main door to get "buzzed in," similar to what is done at the elementary and middle schools. Alumni are welcome to return to visit RHS, administrators will need to discuss how to handle this. Doors will be open before school hours, and in the afternoons/evenings for sports and activities.

The access cards will be proximity cards with no need to swipe. If lost, cost is \$10 to replace. This year the student ID card = the proximity access card. Students will need to keep this card for all years they attend RHS. Going forward, a separate yearly ID card will be issued (only one access card per student). If lost, the access card can be deactivated.

### **Assistant Principal's Report: Jeff Nyhuis**

A goal this year is to increase student body participation in school events. Idea from advisory group: Make a tab on the RHS app for announcements to promote events, to encourage students to go to different things. Advisory group would also like to investigate playing music in hallways between classes, not just in the morning. Request from Ms. Parks: limit music to hallways, because some students use in-between class time to talk to teachers in classroom.

PSAT will be given at RHS this weekend for sophomores and juniors. About 550 students are registered. Numbers are about even between both classes.

Last week there was a Financial Aid meeting for senior parents.

It's "recommendation season" in the guidance department with 70-75% of seniors applying to college by November 15. This increases pressure on teachers and counselors. Today JN shared a presentation with the staff about writing college recommendations. He contacted 7-8 schools to inquire how recommendations are used in the acceptance process and what they would like to see in a recommendation. He shared his presentation and findings (numbers are approximate). For further details contact JN.

#### Example 1: Syracuse University

Applications received: 33K

Admitted: 16K

Enrolled: 4K

Syracuse have a formula to predict how many accepted students will end up enrolling. Recommendations are one of six criteria they review in an application. They consider recommendations to be very important, use them as another indicator to balance test scores, grades and other numbers.

#### Example 2: Princeton University

Applications: 30K

Admitted: 2000

Enrolled: 1300

Recommendations are a significant part of the Princeton admissions process. Approximately 5000+ students that apply have perfect test scores and GPAs. They need recommendations to differentiate among the applicants. They prefer recommendations from teachers of core classes. Students should make sure they know the teacher well to ensure a "personal element" to the recommendation.

#### Example 3: Duke University

Applications: 30K

Admitted: 3500

Enrolled: 1700

Recommendations are one of six factors evaluated in the Duke admissions process. They want to know the student has a personal relationship with the teacher who writes the

recommendation. They like to see examples showing how the student affects the classroom, demonstrates leadership qualities, etc.

#### Example 4: Rutgers University

Rutgers does not accept recommendations in their application process. This is typical of large universities. Admission to Rutgers is numbers-oriented, based on GPA, SAT, ACT scores.

#### Example 5: Lafayette College

Lafayette is a smaller school. Recommendations are very important. They look for student motivation, etc.

#### Example 6: Ramapo College

Ramapo reviews recommendations as part of the admissions process. They look for what makes a student struggle or thrive, academic and personal achievements, and what makes a student unique.

#### Example 7: Yale University

In 2015, Yale received over 30K applications. In 1995, they received about 12K. Their acceptance numbers remain about the same, in the area of 2000 students, and their enrollment stays at about 1300 each year.

The number of colleges that students apply to has increased over the years. This could be due to the advent of electronic applications. Currently many students apply to between 10 and 13 schools. In the past the average was 6 to 8 schools.

JN recommends students apply to 6-8 schools: one “reach,” 3-4 target schools, and 2-3 safe schools. The student should want to attend each of the schools applied to. If you don’t want to go, don’t apply there.

Students usually pick 2 teachers to write a recommendation for them, plus guidance counselor. The student should let the teachers know what type of program they’re applying to (e.g., nursing, political science, etc.). A teacher would never write anything to damage a student, but will advise the student of their opinion. Students should have realistic expectations.

Recommendations from guidance counselors include activities, sports, etc.

Recommendations from teachers describe how the student is in the classroom. How does the student work with faculty and peers? What type of impact does the student have in the classroom? How has the student overcome difficulty? How does the student compare with others, both current peers and students the teacher has encountered in the past?

Recommendations are used in many ways: admissions, scholarships, honors programs, and other instances “beyond the numbers.”

Recommendation tips for teachers (parents can also keep these in mind):

- Be student-specific, not generic
- Give examples of specific classroom work
- Avoid overly general praise, such as “motivated,” when not backed up with substance. This can come across as bland or generic.
- Questions to answer in recommendation: How does the class differ without the student? Quality of work? Originality of approach? Problem solving method? How does the student affect others?
- Conclusion of recommendation: Highlight important points, strength of enthusiasm, compare to other students past and present, predict how well they will do in college. Consider adding the impact the student had at RHS.
- Keep length to one page or less. Usually there is no word limit.

Ms. Parks, German teacher, commented that students and parents should share pertinent experiences with teachers when requesting a recommendation. For example, if a student requests a recommendation from a foreign language teacher, it would be helpful to know if the student has traveled to a country where the language is spoken or gone to a restaurant that serves food from that culture. Many teachers ask students to submit a brief write-up with highlights of the student’s activities, achievements, etc. to assist in recommendation writing.

Lori Weil raised the question, if a student has a strong application in terms of activities and community involvement, but grades are less than ideal, can that student have a chance at admission to a “reach” school? JN responded, if the school knows that RHS has a strong academic program, the admissions committee would look at the application. JN counsels students, don’t “put all eggs in one basket.” Find a second, third choice school where they can be happy. DO NOT apply to schools where they will be unhappy.

TG added, It is important to show interest in the school where a student is applying but meeting the reps at college fair, visiting the school, filling out interest cards, etc. A parent who was a former admissions counselor added, the more contact the better because it shows serious interest. But, JN added, don’t send too many emails.

Contact JN for further details about recommendations.

### **Faculty Report: Ruth Parks & Medha Kirtane**

The faculty is greatly relieved that contract negotiations are complete. Thanks to the administration for their assistance in the process. The BOE rep is not at our RHS H.S.A. meeting tonight because it is concurrent with the monthly BOE meeting, where the final contract is being reviewed and voted on.

Twenty-seven German exchange students are arriving in Ridgewood this week for a 2-week stay.

### **President’s Report: Liz McCarthy**

Info session about full-day kindergarten will be held at GWMS on 10/23/16. Flyer is on the back table, further details on district website. Please note that there was an error in last

week's Ridgewood News article about full-day kindergarten: average homeowner will pay an additional \$111 per year, not per month.

The next Community Outreach program will be on 10/18/16. The topic is Fostering Family Closeness and Respect. Details on flyer and on district website.

Thank you to Kim Lucky for producing our 2016-2017 Booster Calendar.

Please email Liz with any ideas for future RHS H.S.A. meeting topics.

### **Jamboree 2017 World Tour: Gail McCarthy**

Casting call sessions will take place in the Campus Center next week on Monday and Wednesday, plus the following Tuesday. Parents can register online. Please visit their website at [jamboree.org](http://jamboree.org). Last year Jamboree raised over \$140K in scholarship money. Participation opportunities include onstage parts, backstage roles, promotion, etc. All RHS community members are welcome.

### **Treasurer's Report: Linda Hannafey**

Accountant is still finalizing review of books from last fiscal year. Details to follow. Diagnostic SAT/ACT session for juniors was held on the first Friday of school. This event was run jointly by Kaplan and RHS Guidance Dept. Students paid \$20 each and the \$3300 raised was split between the Guidance Department and the RHS H.S.A.

### **Development: Lindsey Barclay & Kate Yates**

There are several fundraising programs that parents can participate in to benefit RHS:

- Amazon Smile: go online and connect your account to RHS's Amazon Smile account. They will give back a small percentage of sales.
- A+ Rewards at Stop & Shop: sign up online, enter shopper card info.
- Ridgewood Cleaners (formerly Regents): For each \$100 check you write, you get credit at the cleaners for \$110 on your account, and \$20 is donated to RHS. Contact Lindsey for further details.

Friends of RHS is the main fundraiser of the year. A letter seeking donations will go out in March. \$28K was raised last year, and 146 families participated. The RHS H.S.A. is currently in the process of allocating the funds raised, with input from the H.S.A. board and principals.

Thanks to Tarleton Landscaping for donating and planting 100 mums at RHS this fall.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:45 pm.

Next RHS H.S.A. meeting: Tuesday 11/15/16, 7:30 pm in the Learning Commons.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Vicki Sharo, Board Secretary.