



**RIDGEWOOD**  
HIGH SCHOOL

## RHS HOME & SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

### Meeting Agenda

Tuesday, October 10, 2023– 7:00 PM

RHS Learning Commons + Zoom

**In Attendance (in-person and ZOOM):** Kelly Ademiak, Kelly Ashford, Shilpi Agarwal, Valerie Auyeung, David Bailey, Sheila Brogan, Dawn Calvetti, Saurabh Dani, Jamie Davis, Brian Dellatore, Lynne Dewhurst-McBurney, Abigail Dunnigan, Alyssa Fiol, Mary Lou Handy, Carolyn Holt, Malcolm Jennings, Medha Kirtane, Marijana Kugo, HyunJu Kwak, Michael Lembo, Susan Madison, Julie Mchedlishvilli, Laura McKenna, Laura McGrath, Mary Micale, Steven Naftzger, Kelly Nakasone, Jeff Nyhuis, Kristen Plumley, Lisette Ramos, Yuna Rubin, Anna Salerno, Natalia Siretska, Alison Stephens, Colleen Tansey, Laura Waisnor, Jill Williams, Danielle Wood, Yanan Wu

\*Other callers participated in the ZOOM but their names were not registered. Some in person attendees may not have signed in.

#### **I. Call to Order/Welcome: Kelly Nakasone**

Kelly Nakasone called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Meeting information was made available via eNews, emails and GroupSpot post. All virtual attendees were accepted through ZOOM meeting. Virtual Attendees were offered the option to submit questions in advance.

#### **II. BOE Candidate Presentations**

#### **III. Call to Order/Approval Past Minutes/HSA Report: Mary Micale**

A motion to approve the June minutes was made by Carolyn Holt and seconded by Kristen Plumley. Meeting notes were unanimously approved.

#### **IV. Back to School Update from Students: Principal's Advisory Committee**

Mr. Nyhuis introduced the group of students in grades 9-12 who form the advisory committee. The club was created 12 years ago and Mr. Nyhuis is proud of the students who work in voicing student concerns in collaboration with the Faculty, HSA, and Board of Education.

Harrison Burns, a student leader, reported that they are happy to be back at meetings in person after the pandemic. Eli Dellatore expressed that as a freshman, this club helped him meet a variety of peers and that clubs in general provide a good break for students during the school day. He thanked the HSA for their help with the club fair. Student leaders continued to share their thoughts on the later start initiative. They shared that they benefited from the extra time in the morning, which could be used for sleep, time to wake up and review work, or breakfast. There were a few concerns about ending later in the day and increased traffic. The students shared that overall it has been a positive experience for them. Harrison Burns closed by stating that they are going to begin to investigate new student concerns such as

the flooding of fields and long lunch lines. All students are invited to their meetings and encouraged to share their ideas with members who are happy to listen.

## **V. RHS Faculty Reports: Medha Kirtane**

Before the official faculty report, Eva Ferrar made an announcement regarding the Bali Trip scheduled for Summer 2024. She announced that there are still a few spots available. Teams of 20 will be working to rebuild part of the coral reef. The reef was destroyed in order to create a sandy bottom that was thought to be good for boating. Now RHS students will have an opportunity to help restore the reef. They will be working in the Northeast part of the Island away from the tourist areas. They will also have the opportunity for some fun when they take surfing lessons and swim with manta rays. There will be a meeting on October 11th at 7:00pm in room 215. Unfortunately, Ms. Ferrar explained that they are unable to take members of the Senior class as the trip takes place after graduation. However, if there was a group of students interested, she would be able to help provide them the information on how to assemble a group on their own. The cost for room and board is approximately \$4000.00 and the airfare will be an additional \$1600.00 (approximately).

Ms. Kirtane then began the faculty report. In Academics, there are a number of courses that will get dual credit with Bergen Community College. Registration is not until February but you can enroll in the courses and get college credit at a reasonable cost which is exceptional. The English and Language Arts are working on Narrative Stories. These "Tell Me Your Story" selections are available school-wide and on display outside of the learning commons. Faculty and Parents are encouraged to read these stories along with the students.

Faculty and Guidance are currently doing college recommendations via Scoir. Current Seniors should speak to faculty and guidance counselors ASAP. Current Juniors should take time to get to know their guidance counselor and faculty members now.

The staff had an excellent Professional Development Day on Monday 10/9. Tim Silvestri presented on the Science Behind Choices. Inclusion, stress and burnout for faculty was discussed. They also discuss how to address these same issues for students.

Ms. Kirtane expressed that from a faculty perspective, they are very happy with the later start. The parking is much easier and it provides staff time to settle in and collaborate with colleagues before the start of the day. Additionally, it gives them time to schedule extra help for students who may have difficulty in coming to period 9. Danielle Wood has been instrumental in setting up professional learning communities for the faculty in the mornings.. Topics include: sustainability, AI, a portrait of the RHS graduate, restorative justice, habits of work, DEI work. Teachers lead these interdisciplinary discussions where they can all get to know each other. Having teachers work collaboratively will greatly benefit the students.

There are a number of upcoming academic trips. This includes International travel as well as day trips. Please check email for more information or ask students for more information.

On 9/29, there was a 7th and 8th grade Marching Band Day held in the Campus Center. Students from GWMS and BFMS were in attendance and had an opportunity to perform with the Marching Band. The rainy weather did not ruin their plans and it was a great opportunity for younger students to work with mentors.

On 9/30, the Marching Band placed 1st in their category and won awards for music, visuals and effects. On Saturday 10/7, the marching band placed 4th out of 12 bands at Met Life. On 10/20, there is an 8th grade band day where students will visit RHS and perform with the wind ensemble and the marching band.

The Ridgewood Public Library is celebrating their 100th anniversary in early November. Various esteemed individuals will be performing and they were kind enough to ask RHS to contribute. Students from the Korean and Phillipine student groups will collaborate on an Asian fusion performance which students are very excited about.

The Girls Varsity Soccer team faces Northern Highlands this Sunday at Riverdale High School in the county semi-finals. Despite the field issues, they still have the ability to play offsite. Keith Cook, Danielle, Jeff and Dave have been instrumental in keeping the students playing offsite which has been very impressive.

The Girls Varsity Tennis team hosted Passaic County Tech in the quarter round of states. Tennis is currently in the semi-finals this week. Where 4 out of 5 positions have moved to the semi final round which is very impressive.

Tutoring is available in the Learning Commons conference room by NHS students during every single period.

Ms. Kirane concluded by thanking the HSA for their support and their involvement in the club fair. She recognized that Basil Pizzuto started the tradition and would have loved it. Ms. Kirtane thanked Danielle for stepping into the role and for her dedication and hard work in continuing the tradition. The faculty is also very grateful to the HSA for their support this past week as they faced the tragic loss of an RHS alumni.

## **VI. Board of Education Report: HyunJu Kwak**

Ms. Kwak thanked the HSA for hosting the 7 BOE candidates. She applauded all of the BOE candidates for stepping up to serve the community.

Bergen County Update: There are 16 new Superintendents this school year, including Ridgewood. Bergen County received grant funds for 104 projects that were approved. Bergen County received a good share of the Federal funds. Many of the projects are HVAC related and we will be notified this week.

There has been a change in busing. Buses can now operate for 20 years instead of 15 years before being replaced. This will help the district now that transportation costs have risen.

There has been a statue declaring that menstrual products must be available in all school bathrooms. The cost will be covered by the state.

The rebalancing of state aid has come to an end after a seven year cycle. There is a rebalancing mandate. We have gotten an increase in state aid and we have been able to work with our budget. Next year is the last year in this current cycle and our aid may not be as robust after the cycle ends.

The statute that allows for retired teachers to work for the district while still collecting pensions can continue for one more year. This addresses the teacher shortage which was exacerbated by the pandemic. She believes it is very beneficial to the district.

On a district-level, we are working with the Superintendent on 4 District goals. The superintendent has been working with the administration to make sure these goals are achievable.

- 1) Evaluate and Update the strategic plan for 2024.
- 2) Reevaluate and Finalize the plan for inclusivity
- 3) Evaluate English Language and Arts and Math Programs
- 4) Reevaluate the state of the district's finances and facilities

Flood mitigation is one of the goals under facilities that has been discussed. They will continue to investigate on an ongoing basis. Carolyn Holt asked if there was any update on the fields. Ms. Kwak explained that they received two quotes and the estimates were "wildly divergent" and it wouldn't be prudent to move forward without getting a third quote. There is also the concern of using an approved contractor so that the work may fall under a warranty. This especially applies to Stevens Field as it is a newer field still under warranty. Saurabh Dani was able to confirm that the contract has been awarded and work will begin on 10/16/23. Ms. Kwak discussed that there have been turf tanks installed on the grass fields. This has been very helpful to better distribute the usage on the grass fields.

### **Board of Education Report: Sheila Brogan**

Ms. Brogan thanked the candidates and encouraged everyone to vote.

She reviewed the three ways to vote:

- 1) By mail-postmarked by 11/7 or earlier place it in the village hall mailbox.
- 2) Early Voting: 10/28-11/5 (Monday thru Saturday 10-8, Sun 10-6)  
There are 9 early voting polls, the closest to us is Bergen Community College and the Larkin House Senior Center in Wyckoff.
- 3) In person on 11/7 6am-8pm

There will be a new district website. The new Public Information Officer is working on this. There will be a new program called the Thought Exchange on the website. Parents, students and citizens can put out a question and get feedback.

ROD Grants- we received 5 million dollars via a reimbursement grant. HVAC projects at Glen and Ridge and also venting at Steam Lab.

This summer the Science Wing roof at RHS was replaced.

Please consider attending the Superintendent Coffee on Thursday 10/12 at 7pm. Almost 70 people attended the last one and the goal is to double that.

Mary Micale thanked the BOE and encouraged all in attendance to attend the meeting with the Superintendent saying that he will happily answer all questions.

## **VII. Class Reports**

**PG 24-** Anna Salerno announced that there will be a parent social on Friday 10/13 . The information is on Group Spot. There is still space for more RSVP's will be a food truck serving lobster rolls.

There is a merchandise sale in progress. They are selling Hydroflasks and Sports wraps. These items are not specifically branded with a class year, just a Ridgewood logo, so they will be good for all residents to enjoy. The sale closes on 10/13.

There is an auction meeting on 10/25 in the Learning Commons. Colleen and Rena are doing a great job.

On Friday 10/13, there will be a Senior Class bagel breakfast.

**Class of 25-** Mary Micale reported that there will be a No Cook Night at Steel Wheel on 10/24.

**Class of 26-** Mary Micale reported that there will be a Fall Social on 10/18 and a No Cook night at Panera Bread on 10/11.

**Class of 27-** Mary Micale reported that there will be a meet and greet on 11/2 at The Office. There is also a no-cook Night at Chestnut Deli- place orders for this by 10/15.

## **VIII. Introduction of SEPAG Rep.**

David Rosen was unable to attend but his information is published in GroupSpot, should you wish to contact him. Kristen Plumley announced that she is a co-rep and Mary Micale encouraged us to contact Kristen as well.

## **IX. Executive Board Updates**

Mary Micale announced the following:

There is an upcoming Jamboree audition this week.

There will be a fundraiser on 10/28 for the Deanne Dunne Scholarship Fund. Mary remembered Deanne as an active member of the Ridgewood community. This scholarship will go to a Senior.

There are some new Board of Health Requirements. You must now fill out forms for events where food is served. We want to be in compliance. If you are planning an event with food, please be sure to put the event on the district calendar so that it will be accounted for. Please contact Mary Micale with any questions.

Carolyn Holt explained that this also applies to events with fire. Once it's on the District Calendar, many times, they will just send you the forms from either the Health Department or the Fire Department. This would not apply to packaged food.

## X. Principals Report

Jeff Nyhuis began by stating that Medha Kirtane covered many topics in her faculty report.

On 11/14- there will be a 7th and 8th grade Choir Day similar to the band day.

On 10/17- There will be a special speaker from Cambodia. He has an amazing story and we have been trying to get him here since before the pandemic. There will be 350 students in the campus center. He will speak at Ridgewood Public Library later that night.

Mr. Nyhuis mentioned that in the light of the tragic passing of Preston Stott, he was able to see some light. He was moved by Jessica Palmieri's eulogy and was able to witness faculty, staff, coaches and students come together during a difficult time. West Bergen mental health offered a "warmline" which was used by several students and alumni. Preston Stott will continue to be missed and Mr. Nyhuis and staff will continue to provide support to students who need help.

Mr. Nyhuis concluded by thanking Danielle Wood and Dave Bailey for their efforts.

Danielle Wood thanked the HSA for the club fair and mentioned that the only issue was that some students thought that the food at the event might be free. Ms. Wood acknowledged that the Student Life hub is not updated but that it is at the very top of her list of things to do. There have been several proposals submitted by students for new clubs. Danielle Wood stated that she was impressed with their initiative.

Ms. Wood announced that the Class Assemblies happened during the second week of school. There was a sense of community while also providing time to enforce some very important rules and regulations. All four grades were presented with the following ideas at the end of their presentations:

1. Focus on the Present
2. Community and Connection
3. Leave it better than you found it

Ms. Wood then continued to talk about Vaping at RHS. In September 2022, there was 1 suspension for vaping. In September 2023, there were 10 suspensions. The vape sensor alerted 25 times in September. Sometimes, it will go off during passing time when there are 15 students in a bathroom. They are working on the following to help with the situation:

1. Training at faculty meetings
2. Interventions for students
3. More data collection to make informed decisions

The GA's are working on ways to move forward and create a plan to provide help for students who vape.

Interested parents can attend the "Let's Talk About Vaping" Presentation on 10/19 at 7pm. The flier is posted on Group Spot.

Anna Salerno confirmed that education regarding vaping is beginning at the middle school level as there are some programs planned already for BFMS.

Mr. Nyhuis mentioned that they are looking for ideas. Other schools have systems where you need to swipe into the bathrooms using your ID cards. This may be hard to manage as kids can

swipe once but three kids could enter when the door is open. They will continue to explore options.

Carolyn Holt added that the Federated HSA would possibly be able to provide funds to support vaping programs if needed.

Dave Bailey

Mr. Bailey will present on the topic of College Admissions at the Board of Education meeting on 11/20. They want to define what they are seeing and the presentation will be factual and evidence based, with some historical background information. The college admissions process has changed quite drastically in the past five years.

Mr. Bailey then presented a slideshow which is accessible by visiting the Ridgewood High School home page, click on guidance and it will bring you to information on the following:

- 2023 Senior Survey
- RHS School Profile
- Senior Focus
- Updated Transcript
- Update to SCOIR (feedback has been positive)
- College Senior Podcast (link)
- Counselor Initiative to visit colleges

Mr. Bailey has been involved in a few different groups in an effort to collaborate and talk to colleagues.

- Peer HS communication/visitations- They have been working with Scarsdale and Mountain Lakes High Schools as a resource.
- Bergen County Director of Guidance Group- This has been a great resource for Mr. Bailey.

You can follow RHS Guidance on Twitter. The October edition Guidance Monthly newsletter will be out shortly via email.

The New Family Ambassador Program will be continued this year. The links to register for this will be released soon. Carolyn Holt and Mary Micale have been very instrumental in getting this off the ground. We really want to welcome new members to the community through this “buddy system” and provide them advice about schools, communities and more. There are 45 new families to RHS this year.

Kristen Plumley asked if there was any data from last year about how many families participated. Some Ambassador families had not heard back from the new families. Julie Mchedlishvili said that she felt that the program was very rewarding and that she is still in touch with some of the new families she worked with. Dave Bailey explained that new families will have the opportunity to sign up for the program instead of being automatically enrolled in the program so that may increase the participation.

Julie Mchedlishvili suggested that we reach again later in the year, perhaps around January, to check in to see if they needed help later on in the year. January may be a good time as they are beginning the class scheduling process and that can be a confusing process.

Mr. Bailey thanked Kristen Smith, one of the counselors for organizing the New Family Ambassador Program.

Mr. Bailey then presented a slide with data regarding the class of 2023. This information and additional data will be presented at the 11/20 Board of Education meeting.

In 2023, 3811 applications went out, 8.6 per student with a 55% acceptance rate. 1303 average SAT/26 ACT Average. 8-9 college applications is ideal.

The RHS Guidance department does believe that all students should take the SAT and ACT. 440 students are taking the PSAT on Saturday 10/14.

There will be a Q and A panel on college admissions on 10/12 at 7pm. A Zoom link will be sent.

On 11/16 Peter Van Buskirk will give a presentation on "The Admissions Game" in the RHS Campus Center for students and parents.

Dave Bailey thanked everyone for their support with the recent tragedy and loss of Preston Stott. He was very proud of how the students rallied around each other and provided support. Mr. Nyhuis pledged additional support in light of the recent news events in Israel. Mr. Bailey had already identified families who may need support and some have already used school counseling services. They have been employing and teaching a method given to them by Tim Silvestri from Lehigh University. The method is "Look, Listen, Link", which encourages one to look around for people who need help, listen to them, and link them to additional support as needed.

A well-received comment was made that camouflage should not be used as a Spirit Week item. It can be a painful reminder of war and Anna Salerno said she would remind the student council at BFMS that camouflage is not appropriate.

A question was asked regarding the usefulness of Skyward. Does it cause additional stress to students who may be constantly checking? Mr. Nyhuis encouraged parents to talk to students about how frequently they are checking. They have evaluated many options, including limiting access to skyward. Mary Micale encouraged the idea to spend time discussing Skyward Access in Freshman Focus.

Kristen Plumley announced the Friends of Music Songwriting Contest. This contest is open to all students in grades K-12 and is a rewarding experience. Please contact Kristen with any questions.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:37 PM. Minutes respectfully submitted by Laura Waisnor, Secretary

*Next RHS HSA meeting: **Tuesday, November 28, 2023- 7:30 PM** - RHS Learning Commons + Zoom*