

Ridgewood High School Home & School Association Meeting Minutes for June 8, 2021

In Attendance:

Valerie Auyeung, Amy Beiersdorf, Sara Beinstein, Sheila Brogan, Kelly Buchsbaum, Dawn Calvetti, Christine Chanley, Steven Cheng, Christine Clay, Elena Conn Anthony Corcoran, Allison de Meulder, Al Dort, Alyssa Fiol, Hayley Gluck Isabella Harellick, Carolyn Holt, Jenny Kim, Medha Kirtane, Kelly Krumenacker-Choong, Michael Lembo, Kaitlin Levine, Sookyung Lim, Benjamin Liu, Nicole Liu, Kathy Marshall, Rose Mary McCotter, Carla Merlino, Joe Micale, Mary Micale, Jeff Nyhuis, Caroline Oddy, Ruth Parks, Basil Pizzuto, Andrea Rademacher, Rebecca Rubenstein, Lisa Sands, Karyn Schoenherr, Saira Shah, Audrey Shin, Alison Stephens, Cathy Stillwagon, Colleen Tansey, Alex Testa, Frances Loshin-Turso, Anastasia Warden, Jill Williams

**Other Callers participated on the ZOOM – but their names were not registered*

I. Call to Order: Mary Micale

Mary Micale called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm. Meeting information was made available via eNews, emails and GroupSpot post. All attendees were accepted through Zoom meeting.

II. Approval of May Meeting Minutes:

A motion to approve the May meeting minutes was made by Kelly Buchsbaum and seconded by Sara Beinstein. Meeting notes were unanimously approved.

III. Student Representatives: Audrey Shin (Junior)

This year has been full of ups and downs, but RHS and its students continued the Tradition of Excellence while having fun.

When the physical barriers were removed from the desks in the classrooms, it made a huge difference for the students. It was much easier to connect with each other. Open Campus had overwhelming support from the students, it is going very well.

The Special Needs Siblings and Friends Club, run by Nicky Crane and Cole Sheehy, is running a school-wide book challenge featuring Ally Stoker (RHS Alum) and her

book “A Chance to Fly”. On June 10th they will do a Q&A with Ally and RHS students.

Students showed their support for Mental Health Awareness by wearing green on May 27th.

The Social Justice Club hosted a successful fundraising event to support “Salvation Hate” at Cookie Connect. A portion of the profits from the cookies were donated to support the cause.

The Externship program, which connects current RHS students and RHS alum, has been a huge success. Mr. Monahan runs this Program.

IV. Class of 2020 Reports Back: Kaitlyn Levine, Joe Micale, Alex Testa, Stephen Wang (questions from Mr. Nyhuis)

Introductions and how did they choose roommate?

Alex Testa - Northeastern University:

Alex was randomly set up with a roommate. When he arrived, his roommate was no longer coming to school. When Alex went back for second semester he was randomly placed with another student.

Kaitlyn Levine – Wake Forest University:

Kaitlyn was connected to her roommate by mutual friends. It worked out very well.

Joe Micale – University of Michigan:

Joe searched for and found his first roommate on the Honors Program Facebook page. Second semester the University canceled their housing contracts and he chose to live off campus with three freshmen from RHS.

Steve Chang – Rutgers University:

Steve’s classes were all virtual and he stayed home to attend Rutgers online.

Post Covid, what are you looking forward to going back to next semester?

Alex Testa - Northeastern University:

Northeastern students were tested for Covid-19 every 3 days. The restrictions were based on those placed on the City of Boston. Students were allowed one guest in their room during second semester, but no guests were allowed in first semester. All students have to be vaccinated to come back to Northeastern, that will help to make things more normal.

Kaitlyn Levine – Wake Forest University:

Wake Forest had random Covid testing for their students. Students were allowed to have one guest per room during the course of the year. First semester was stricter with rules than the second semester. There was a huge spike in covid cases at the beginning of second semester, this created a herd immunity on campus.

Joe Micale – University of Michigan:

Michigan did a poor job of enforcing restrictions; therefore, they had a huge spike in cases right as the year began. Joe came home for most of first semester. Second semester was better because the University didn't have to take responsibility for students, as they had terminated their housing contracts for the year. Joe is looking forward to getting back to normal classes and social life.

Steve Chang – Rutgers University:

It was an interesting year due to being an all remote student. Classes at Rutgers can be large making it difficult to follow on zoom. Steve is looking forward to getting back to extracurriculars and having fun.

What are one or two things that RHS did well to prepare you and what we can do to improve?

Alex Testa, Northeastern University:

RHS prepared Alex for the rigors of college classes.

Testing is different in college; therefore, preparation is very different. RHS could adapt to making bigger tests (midterm and final) to help with preparing for college exams.

Kaitlyn Levine – Wake Forest University:

RHS prepares students very well with time management and organization.

Joe Micale – University of Michigan:

RHS prepared Joe academically for the rigors of college classes. Having free periods at RHS helps to prepare students for college schedules, that include down time during the day.

RHS could focus more on real life skills (i.e. tracking expenditures).

Steve Chang – Rutgers University:

RHS could change Senior Focus a bit, switching the focus to helping the students decide on what they want to concentrate on in college and beyond. (major, career etc.).

What is one thing you know now about college that you wish you knew in September?

Alex Testa - Northeastern University:

Alex only hung around with the one student in his dorm that was from Ridgewood. He should have expanded his social bubble and talk to everyone. Everyone is just trying to make friends.

Kaitlyn Levine – Wake Forest University:

Kaitlyn wishes she had taken advantage of every opportunity to meet new people. She said you really have to put yourself out there to see who you click with.

Joe Micale – University of Michigan:

Joe wishes he had pushed himself to meet more people. He relied on the students he knew from Ridgewood which limited him from meeting new people.

Steve Chang – Rutgers University:

It is important to set a good system to keep yourself on track. It is easy to get distracted in college.

What advice would you give a Junior going into Senior Year? (Medha Kirtane)

Alex Testa - Northeastern University:

Alex advised the Juniors not to stress as they have done most of the work prior to submitting their applications. Applications are full of chance and odds; you can't change the outcome once they are submitted. The college you choose is just a starting point.

Kaitlyn Levine – Wake Forest University:

Kaitlyn did her Common Application and all essays over the summer, which was very helpful. She suggests asking for teacher recommendations prior to the summer.

Joe Micale – University of Michigan:

Joe did all of his essays and the Common Applications over the summer. He applied to 17 schools and got some in at the application deadlines. He spent most of Christmas Break finishing up applications. He recommends doing everything earlier.

V. Class Reports: Parent Representatives from 2021 and 2022 (Mary Micale reported)

PG21: Any senior parents that are available or want to volunteer for Project Graduation should contact Pamela Lobosco, Rosie McCooe or Sandy Pires.

2022: Junior parent volunteers are needed for Graduation and Wrecking Ball (take down Project Graduation).

VI. Faculty Report: Medha Kirtane

The RHS Alumni Association is hosting the first Ridgewood Externship Program for Juniors and Seniors. Over 200 students are participating in the program. Tim Monahan and Billy McCabe are working hard to grow this new program.

Over 300 students are attending Ally Stroker's presentation.

Kevin Feeley runs a Leadership Counsel with extracurricular leadership students and faculty. They are finishing the year with a meeting with Jim Sroker this Thursday.

The last Maroon Awards of the year are Thursday. 14 students are being recognized for making RHS a better place with Acts of Kindness.

Asian Festival was exciting. It was different this year and the students adapted very well. The Festival was an online performance and was broadcast to the RHS students during the day.

In School Concerts are resuming at RHS (Gym 1) in June.

Band Concert – June 9

Orchestra Concert – June 10

Choir Concert– June 11

Each student is given two tickets for their families to attend. The concerts will also be live streamed.

Athletics:

The Boys Lacrosse team lost in the State Sectional Finals to Hunterdon Central HS.

The Girls Lacrosse team won the Bergen County Championship.

The JV Baseball team won the Bergen County Tournament.

The Varsity Baseball Team won the Freedom Division Champions (5th year in the row).

Boys and Girls Track & Field won the Bergen County Tournaments (4th year in the row for both teams).

The Girls Track and Field team won their State Sectional Title.

The Boys Track and Field Team came in 2nd in Sectionals.

A/P exams are going on now, the exams are largely digital.

Juniors have met with their guidance counselors and teachers are starting “recommendation season”. Students should understand the process of asking the teachers for recommendations.

Retirements:

Sheryl Soucy– Wellness

Liz O’Brien – Grade Advisor

John May – Guidance Counselor, Freshman Focus and Social Studies teacher

Pat Magi – Main office

Chuck Johnson – Retired from his teaching role however Chuck will be back to coach football this Fall.

VII. Board of Education Update: Sheila Brogan

The Focus of the Board of Education is the reopening of schools for September. There is every expectation that students will be back in school full time.

Teacher contracts were approved at the last BOE meeting.

The Senior Awards are a highlight of the end of the year.

With Funding provided by the Governor’s Council the BOE hosted a program on the Dangers of Vaping. About 40 parents attended. There is a recording of the meeting and we hope parents can watch it. It is very important information.

VIII. Board Updates:

Friends of RHS – Status of Campaign: Sara Beinstein

The Friends of RHS campaign is ongoing. Thus far, the campaign has raised \$13,000 which is nearing the goal of \$15,000. This week we will have a last push to see if we can hit the goal.

Some of the funds raised are paying for new lights for the Little Theatre. These lights will be installed by Fall.

Some of the major wish-list items were taken care of by the generous donation given to RHS by the Duffield Foundation.

IX. Principal Reports: Jeff Nyhuis and Basil Pizzuto

Jeff Nyhuis:

College Update – the Senior Survey is a work in progress. We have had to gather information differently this year due to some students being virtual.

Over 3,500 transcripts were sent out to colleges from RHS this year. The RHS students applied to many of the same schools this year that they have in the past. Guidance tries to get the students to expand their ideas and explore other schools.

Parents will be able to come back into the building to utilize college information this fall. They can look up a school, review the number of students that applied and how those applications resolved. (accepted, wait list, denied).

Overall students need to work on their soft skills. Asking teacher in person for a recommendation is important.

On the Senior Profile, you will see every student (not by name) that applied to a College and how many are enrolling.

The Senior Awards will be held virtually on June 10.

ACT are being held at on Saturday, June 12 at RHS.

Basil Pizzuto:

Congratulations to Principal Jeff Nyhuis. Applications are coming in to fill Jeff's current VP position.

The amount of significant personal change at RHS, adding onto a pandemic has made for an even more challenging year. RHS got through the year without bringing in additional staff.

The weather for the Prom was the best weather RHS ever had. The kids have been terrific about wearing masks in school, but they did not do well with them at the prom.

Senior Students will get yearbooks in time for others to sign them.

Graduation is on target to be exactly what it was 3 years ago. There are no protocols in place that are above and beyond safety.

Project Graduation will not have a mask mandate.

Steve Burke is joining the Grade Advisor Team.

Answers to Covid-19 Reopening Questions from Parents (presented by Carolyn Holt) Jeff Nyhuis and Basil Pizzuto

Basil answered questions:

RHS is going to be ready for a September open.

The Community chose to keep some of their kids home for a portion of the year. That was not the schools doing.

There is a lot of emphasis put on a 4-hour day – RHS never had a 4-hour day. It has always been 6 hours during Covid.

RHS is going back to the original schedule, 16 enrichments days (student sleep-ins).

The Building will look the same as it has in the past.

The schedule will go back to the following: 50 min, 80 min, 50min, unit lunch, 50 min, 80 min, 50 min.

Vaccinated students do not have to Quarantine next school year.

Open Campus has been wonderful for the students. We still have the check in process, that will end this year.

Lunch will be the same as it was prior to Covid-19.

There is no need for outdoor classrooms at RHS to meet Covid protocols.

The Busing Contract is being handled and will be ready for the Fall.

RHS was run with minimal substitute teachers this year. Teachers covered each other's classes. Teachers' Aides love working at the school, and they are fantastic.

Pomptonian is an area of concern, however it is more for the elementary and middle schools. Pomptonian is having staffing issues, they are looking to hire.

Parents have been allowed into the building for meetings. The school has not been open for parents to drop things off. This has helped in that kids are not relying on parents for everything. Parents should be allowed back in the Fall.

RHS is not allowed to ask staff or students if they are vaccinated. The state could require vaccinations at some point.

Professional Development for teachers will be moved to the summer. Most of the staff will partake in this, they are all focused on planning for fall. There is a focus on Mental Health.

Kids have fallen behind during the pandemic; teachers understand that all the students have gone through this. Teachers have as well. The teacher knows where the students are coming from, they are not alone.

There are two opportunities available at RHS this summer for students that have been identified as struggling students. These kids will benefit from these programs to get back on track.

There will no longer be a remote option for next year.

Administration and Student Government are hoping to have a Welcome Back BBQ, they will need financial support to pull this off.

The Club Fair will be held in person this year and will include the Freshman and Sophomore classes.

There is a lack of energy on Zooms. In person communication is best.

The biggest adjustment we made during the pandemic was adding technology to the classrooms.

RHS is undergoing a major construction project over the summer. The Electric Service has to be replaced. The project will take all summer. The plan is for them to be done by September 1.

The hope is that virtual days can be used for snow days. It would be nice to use them the days after a storm when there is a big cleanup. This would help to avoid delayed openings.

X. Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 9:11pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Christine Chanley, Secretary