

Ithaca High School PTA Meeting, April 7, 2015

Minutes by PTA secretary Tonya Engst

PTA president Amita Verma led the meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Because we wanted more attendees to have more opportunity to review the minutes prior to the meeting, we deferred approval of the October meeting minutes until the next meeting.

PTA MINI-GRANTS REPORT

Ellen Hartman, PTA mini-grants coordinator, reported that the PTA's fall mini-grants totaled \$1,050. Also, the spring mini-grants have now been awarded. For the spring mini-grants, the PTA is awarding \$950. Grants are for amounts up to \$200. Some grants that were funded:

- * Nutritious snacks for students receiving after-school academic support.
- * Help with entrance fees for the model UN club.
- * Subscription to iEarn.
- * Repairs to a digital camera.
- * Books for a classroom library chosen to engage elective readers.
- * Funding assistance for a few WISE projects for seniors.
- * Lab tables for a classroom; the teacher found a discount on Craigslist, and with IPEI and PTA grants was able to purchase them.

Ellen says she hopes teachers will be encouraged by projects that were funded this year and apply next year.

Ellen thought that it was interesting that several teachers wanted to provide snacks as part of their funding requests. She suggested that the PTA could do a food drive for nonperishable items to be kept in a food library that teachers can access. A parent comments that this is done at Cayuga Heights Elementary School. Ellen noted that the Pay It Forward student club might be willing to help with raising money or gathering food. The idea was floated that the PTA could create a position of Food Bank Coordinator for next year.

NOMINATIONS FOR NEXT YEAR'S PTA EXECUTIVE BOARD

The PTA "year" matches the school year, so new board members transition in over the summer as departing board members transition out. We have elections at our June meeting. Our nominating committee is forming now. Openings on the board include two co-president positions, secretary, and one of the two PTA council liaison positions. Although our Membership position is filled, we are looking for a helper Membership person who would learn the ropes next year and then take over the following year.

In regard to the nominating committee, the general membership of the PTA does elect the committee's chair. Thus, after a short discussion of Alice Wu's qualifications to chair the nominating committee, Patricia Sipple motioned that we elect her as the chair. Janine Eng seconds the motion. The motion passes unanimously.

UPCOMING PTA-SPONSORED EVENTS

Amita noted that the annual staff appreciation luncheon is coming in June. The PTA is especially looking for volunteers to prepare homemade desserts and to come in person to help with hosting the luncheon. Look in the e-news for details.

Anne Horst, our event coordinator, gave us some highlights of what's coming later this year:

ICSD Budget Discussion: Tuesday, April 21, 6-7:30pm; IHS Activities Building (Building B). Amanda Verba and Matt Landahl will explain the Board of Education's proposed budget for the 2015/16 school year. IHS Principal Jason Trumble will comment on how that budget might impact IHS. PTA members will vote on whether we endorse the proposed budget.

Google Chromebooks Coming to a Student Near You: Thursday, May 7, 5:30pm (location TBA). Chromebooks are the laptops that IHS students will be receiving next year. Dominick Lisi of the ICSD Educational Technology department will lead this presentation.

[You may wish to read the ICSD FAQ about Chromebooks at <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1wB5-sH7Ra4X5rgNP3GNStxslAtncvmVPmurWciU5ao4/edit> before attending the meeting;

Location is now set for GIAC, 310 Court Street, note that parking is available at the far side of the pool in a new lot between Etsy and Cascadilla St.]

End-of-year membership meeting: June TBA, possibly a special focus, TBA.

Annual college panel: During this event, college students come back to Ithaca High and answer questions from students. June TBA. This will be held during the day.

FEEDBACK SOUGHT

Anne is seeking feedback for the ideal meeting venue, with respect to removing any kind of barrier to attendance, such as bussing or time of day. Feedback that was given:

- * People like to listen in at dinner, like with a town hall.
- * Is there too much meeting duplication? For some topics, a three-way joint meeting might make more sense because everyone can come together and there is less organization for each PTA. Also, parents with kids in more than one school, can come to just one meeting.
- * Why not give the same meeting at more than one time/location? For example one meeting/topic could occur at DeWitt, Boynton, and IHS (each hosted by the respective PTAs), but parents could attend whichever meeting made best sense for their schedules/locations, and the meetings would be planned and publicized accordingly.

TREASURER'S REPORT

PTA Treasurer Shivaun Archer Shivaun distributes a summary of the PTA's income and expenses for this fiscal year, which began on July 1. This summary will be attached to the PDF version of these minutes. Income is slightly lower so far than projected for the entire year, but not low enough to cause any concern.

We are looking for some cash and food donations for the staff appreciation lunch. Donations can be sent to the Ithaca High School PTA, 1401 N. Cayuga St., Ithaca, NY 14850. Attention: Staff Appreciation Lunch.

A CONVERSATION WITH JASON TRUMBLE, OUR NEW PRINCIPAL

Jason asked that we call him Jason. Jason comes from Ogdensburg, a very small town in northern New York. He has two brothers. Everyone knew everyone else. And you behaved because of the small-town social fabric.

Jason is an ICSD parent. He has a senior and a sophomore at IHS, and a child at Boynton.

Jason loves Ithaca. He has been working in the ICSD since 1992. He started at Ithaca High as a US History teacher. He also taught Economics and Global. During his time as a teacher at Ithaca High, he saw eight principals come and go. He also coached cross-country and track for ICSD for 11 years.

He decided that he would get another degree so he could move into administration. He did this and then became the associate principal at Boynton, a post that he held for 3 years. After that, he was Boynton's principal for 6 years. He worked hard to make it a school where students would feel that they belonged, where they would feel that it was their own school. After working as Boynton's principal for 6 years, he switched to working at a more centralized level for a few years as Chief Secondary Officer before accepting the position as interim principal and now principal of Ithaca High.

One thing he was reminded of while working as interim principal was that he enjoys the energy that comes from being closer to the kids and getting to know them. For example, he likes to meet the busses. When he made the decision to become principal, it was because of the faces he sees around him and because of the human energy at Ithaca High.

His vision is for every student to be successful, with a 100% graduation rate. This, he says, might be impossible in reality, but it is his mindset. No student off any list. Students involved in athletics and activities. He wants students to feel that they belong and are a part of something.

He also wants to have a school where systems make sense, and we understand why we do the things that we do. And where the communication makes sense and is useful. He is still feeling his way in and finding things that don't make sense to him. He feels an urgency to make it right for kids who are here now.

He noted that it is a way different world from when today's parents grew up. Police do come to Ithaca High on friendly visits, just neighborly. This is so that people can get to know each other. He feels that in any downtown area where 1,600 people gather during the working day, we would expect a police presence. And, better to have a neighborly, friendly presence than a reactive-only presence.

With Jason's self-introduction over, the meeting moved to a few questions from attendees.

QUESTION: AP Classes

- * What if a kid signs up but the class is discovered to be too hard or too much homework?
- * Why AP classes in 9th grade, such as AP Global which was offered this school year?
- * What about homework overload/sleep deprivation?

Jason said that in the late 1990s, IHS had 94 teachers and that the homework load wasn't well-coordinated for 9th graders, so an effort was put in place to have it be more coordinated for 9th graders. But he feels that this could use another look; as a parent he's seen that IHS is giving too much homework. He feels that IHS needs to be more clear about how much homework a class will have. He also noted that in recent years there is a 24-26% turnover each year among staff.

The purpose of offering AP Global in 9th grade is to have more rigorous class in 9th grade. And to offer another AP option in the humanities, to balance the many math/science APs.

Some parents comment that the AP Global class this year has had more homework than was expected. There were also comments that some kids took the AP class who might have been happy in an Honors class, but didn't want to take a Regents class where Honors could be achieved by adding on homework. There was also the concern that next year's 9th graders more clearly understand what AP Global will be like before they sign up. And there was the suggestion that it'd be nice if there was better humanities preparation at an earlier age so more kids would be ready to take a 9th grade AP Global class.

Jason said that he is hoping that within 5 days time that ICSD will have posted a video about the class, with students talking about their Global experience, and talking about how much homework the class had as compared to others. In this way, he hopes that incoming 9th graders can make a good decision about whether to sign up for the class. He hopes that by posting the video on the Web, it will be easy for a lot of people to benefit from it.

QUESTION/SUGGESTION: Improve college-application related communications

For example, especially for a student applying early decision, the timing matters.

A parent asks for clarification about how much guidance the counselors can do, observing that the counselors have large case loads, and noting that if IHS doesn't have resources to provide certain types of guidance-like services, it would be great if that could be communicated so parents know what to expect.

Another parent says that it feels important that the counselor know the student so that he or she can have that relationship in mind when writing a college recommendation, so it would be helpful if a student could keep the same counselor all the way through.

Suggestion: Documentation could be written. We could have a committee work on this, says Ellen Hartman who would like to be on such a committee.

Suggestion: Put a reminder or two on the bottom of each report card and progress report. These could be short, in the style of a tweet, so easy for parents to process.

Lively discussion. Jason agrees that it is an area worth further discussion/work.

QUESTION/SUGGESTION: Is it necessary for band/orchestra students to miss a normal class, in order to participate in weekly sectionals?

This occurs in grades 3-12 in ICSD, wherein students have a weekly lesson or sectional practice session. To attend, they miss whatever other class they would normally be in. In IHS, they have a sectional practice session. Typically, the period missed occurs on a rotation, so a student might miss first period one week, second period the next week, etc.

Another lively discussion with brainstorming of alternatives like a common study hall, giving orchestra a “lab” period analogous to science classes, and reducing sectionals to every other week. Also, a more individualized approach would be helpful for any students who are really struggling when they miss a particular class that they are finding very challenging. A parent notes that the sectionals are usually in a small group, like 3-4 kids, so that small group time is very valuable.

Action item: Mr. Trumble will check into this. [He has done so in the time since the meeting and before I could finalize these minutes; he says that appears that IHS’s approach to sectionals is very common in schools and seems to be the best balance of needs that can be achieved at the moment.]

QUESTION/SUGGESTION: Discuss the class-scheduling process and how parents can be involved.

Parents should expect to receive a letter in the regular USPS mail that lists what the student has signed up for. When? Jason will check.

Ellen Hartman says that the communication isn’t very good, and that the scheduling could use a review and being rewritten. Could there be an opportunity for a small group of parents to review and provide feedback?

Jason agrees that this an area worth looking into.

Treasurers Report - Shivaun Archer
Reporting Period (7/1/2014 - 4/1/2015)

Balance in checking account 03/25/15

\$7,810.26

INCOME

	Actual YTD	Budget	Variance
Directory/Guide Advertising	\$ 1,463.00	\$ 1,500.00	\$ (37.00)
Donations - Morning Munch	\$ 75.00		\$ 75.00
Donations -Staff Appreciation Luncheon	\$ -	\$ 500.00	\$ (500.00)
Membership Donations	\$ 1,290.00	\$ 1,500.00	\$ (210.00)
Membership Dues	\$ 2,985.00	\$ 3,000.00	\$ (15.00)
School Pictures Rebate	\$ 1,197.00	\$ 1,200.00	\$ (3.00)
Other Fundraiser (Coffee fundraiser)	\$ 460.50	\$ 530.00	\$ (69.50)

TOTAL INCOME

\$ 7,470.50 **\$ 8,230.00** **\$ (759.50)**

\$ - \$ -

EXPENSES

Administration(checks/webhosting,printing, copying etc.)	\$ 138.28	\$ 200.00	\$ (61.72)
Insurance	\$ -	\$ 235.00	\$ (235.00)
National/State PTA Council Dues	\$ 1,076.00	\$ 1,200.00	\$ (124.00)
PTA Leadership training	\$ -		\$ -
Teacher support Mini-Grants	\$ 1,343.04	\$ 2,000.00	\$ (656.96)
Awards Day	\$ -	\$ 720.00	\$ (720.00)
Family Liaison Program	\$ 212.34	\$ 280.00	\$ (67.66)
I.H.S. Programs	\$ 31.67	\$ 200.00	\$ (168.33)
Link Crew Program	\$ 135.29	\$ 250.00	\$ (114.71)
Open House	\$ -		\$ -
Newsletter printing, misc.	\$ -	\$ 120.00	\$ (120.00)
Guide/Directory Printing	\$ 330.60	\$ 475.00	\$ (144.40)
Staff Appreciation Luncheon	\$ -	\$ 2,000.00	\$ (2,000.00)
Staff refreshments(MorningMunch)	\$ 708.99	\$ 650.00	\$ 58.99
Discretionary Fund/Other	\$ 114.00		\$ 114.00

TOTAL EXPENSES

\$ 4,090.21 **\$ 8,330.00** **\$ (4,239.79)**