



**DHMS PTSA General Membership Meeting**  
Tuesday, October 11, 2022 at 7 pm  
Dorothy Hamm Middle School Library and on Zoom

MINUTES

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**I. Welcome and Call to Order**

- Khaleen Monaro (DHMS PTSA President) opened the meeting at 7 pm.
- There were 8 attendees present, including 5 members of the Executive Board (Christa Mansur, VP Programs; Dena Porter, VP Communications; Amy Erwin, Treasurer; Angela Huskey, Secretary; Ellen Smith, DHMS Principal), as well as at least 5 participants online, including Khal.
- There was a motion to call the meeting to order, which was seconded.

**II. Review and/or Amend Draft Agenda**

- Khal presented the meeting agenda and asked for any amendments.
- There were no requests or suggestions for changes to the agenda.
- A motion to approve the agenda was made, which was seconded.

**III. Approval of September 2022 PTSA General Membership Meeting Minutes**

- Khal provided online participants and in-person attendees an opportunity to review the minutes from the September 2022 DHMS PTSA General Membership meeting.
- No requests or suggestions for revisions or amendments was made.
- There was a motion to approve the minutes, which was seconded.

**IV. Membership Report**

- Khal presented the latest information about current membership:
  - There are 290 members at this time, which includes parents, students, faculty, and staff. This represents about 30% of the student body.
- Khal would like to achieve 50% participation and sought ideas for how to increase membership and community participation.
  - Ellen suggested having a DHMS PTSA table at the student-led parent-teacher conferences that will be taking place on the afternoon of October 20 and on October 21. The PTSA could maintain a table to provide information to parents coming in to meet with teachers during the conferences.
  - One participant asked for the agendas and meeting minutes to be posted and made available for those parents who are unable to attend meetings.
    - Links to this information is provided in the Phoenix Post newsletter, and the PTSA will continue to provide the information in a timely manner.
  - Khal suggested that we could encourage people to sign up to be a PTSA member when the PTSA co-hosts the Principal's parent chat in December. It was suggested



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that the parent chat occur on the second Tuesday of December (December 13) to coincide with the current regular Tuesday schedule for PTSA meetings.

- Angela noted that she would likely not be able to attend an in-person meeting during that day due to work commitments.
- Ellen will include a link to the PTSA webpage at the end of each Phoenix Flyer, so that people can link to the webpage for any PTSA news, fundraisers, and other information.

**V. Engagement Activities**

- Back-to-School Block Party Report (*Amy Erwin*)
  - Amy reported that there were likely around 300 kids in attendance and that the students had a great time. The DJ was a popular feature of the event. The ice cream, which was obtained from Safeway, was a lot cheaper than last year.
  - Ellen noted that in a recent Equity Team meeting she received some feedback that some parents felt that it was difficult to engage other parents. They suggested that at future events, it would be good to have ways to help adults get to know other adults, e.g., name tags or a check-in list.
  - Khal encouraged the group to think about other things that we could do to boost attendance and participation, since around 300 students is only about 1/3 of the student population. She would like to see 50% participation.
  - Some suggestions for increasing participation included:
    - Having grade-specific activities, interclass competitions (like last year's Phoenix games) or even having separate back-to-school events for the different grades, or at least for 6<sup>th</sup> grade. This could provide some structure to encourage students to get to know each other, especially for students who might be shy or new to the school.
    - Organized games or activities to provide students with structured opportunities to get to know each other.
    - Publicize date (or dates) earlier in the summer if known over the summer
    - Have name tags for parents so that parents can get to know each other more easily
    - Provide balls or other items for students to play with on the field
    - Consider having the party on a day during the week, rather than Friday, as a way of getting more staff to attend. Ellen indicated that she would talk to staff about whether that would be an effective incentive.



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- It was also noted that having more structured activities will likely necessitate more parent volunteers, which is also a good way for people to get to know each other.
  
- Membership Drive Raffle Awards
  - Ashley Burt won the DHMS raffle prize, which was a ride in a police cruiser and a meet-and-greet with a police therapy dog for her daughter Lucy and two friends provided by the Arlington County Policy Department (ACPD).
  - The students and the police officers had a great time.
  - ACPD was very happy to offer this ride and to have the opportunity to connect with the students. They would like the opportunity to do more, within the constraints imposed on them by the Arlington County. We should consider other opportunities to reach out to them in this way.
  - We will plan to use the photos from the event in messaging.
  
- One DHMS One Week
  - This event will take place during the week of October 24-28.
  - The fundraising target is \$28,000.
  - Melissa Hardt is the chairperson of the activities and is looking for additional volunteers to help with the planning. This is an opportunity for everyone to get involved and contribute.
  - When asked if the Student Council could participate and offer suggestions for Spirit Week dress-up days, Ellen noted that the Student Council is still getting organized. She would inquire about whether spirit day ideas could be brainstormed.
  - In order to convey to the community the importance of the fundraising, there was a discussion about to focus messaging. It was decided that focusing on teacher grants (including specific requests from last year) and the efforts to get DHMS on the U.S. Civil Rights Trail would be positive messages for encouraging donations.
  - There was a discussion about linking the One DHMS One Week activities to an auction that lets people bid on specific things they would like to support more. But the bookkeeping is more complicated if people designate specific funds for their donations, and generally, the Phoenix Fund has been advertised as being for general purposes. It would be better to keep the messaging focused on raising funds for a more general purpose.
  
- Halloween Candy Drive



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- The Halloween candy store is now live. A link for purchasing candy was provided in the October 10 Phoenix Post and will be in future October Phoenix Posts.
- All profits from the candy drive go towards the Phoenix Fund.
- The last day for ordering is October 27, as everything will need to be distributed by October 28.
- The class that sells the most candy will get a pizza party.
  
- Halloween Costume Contest and Awards
  - The PTSA is encouraging students and staff to dress up and will be awarding prizes for
    - Best costume per grade
    - Best overall costume
    - Prize for class with most costume participation
    - Best faculty or staff costume
  - Students will vote for costume winners per classroom.
  - At this time the prizes for contest winners have not been determined.
  
- Reflections Update (*Jean Choi*)
  - The deadline for submissions is October 14, but there are only 2 submissions so far. We are hoping for more submissions by the end of the week, but we may consider extending the deadline for a week to allow for more participation.
  - After submissions are due, Jean would like to prepare participation certificates for students and provide prizes for the top three TAs with submissions.
  - Given the low numbers, Jean was interested in ways to encourage participation next year.
  - Jean reflected that she has heard that students have not expressed a high level of interest in participating in this program due to conflicting demands on their time. In addition, Ellen noted that teachers do not typically spend class time on this since there are so many other demands on their time.
  - It was suggested that there could be an after-school Reflections Art club to provide the students something to do after school and to provide opportunity to work on this.
  - In addition, when the theme is announced in the spring, it would be good to advertise this in June newsletters before school dismisses for the summer to encourage kids to start thinking about it early and to have something to do over the summer.



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- Spirit Wear Sales
  - Spirit wear store is open until the end of October 12.
- School Pictures
  - School pictures are October 12, and the make-up day is November 2.
- October Appreciation Activities
  - In addition to the dates for activities noted in the Phoenix Post, the following additional activities are planned for October:
    - Now until October 28: Halloween candy drive
    - October 25: Lebanese Taverna night (they will donate 15% of all sales to the DHMS PTSA)
    - October 27 at 7pm (in person): The PE department is hosting Family Life Education night at Dorothy Hamm for all grades.
  - Ellen also noted that on November 3 at 6.30pm, Regina Boyd will be hosting (virtually) a Gifted Services Information Night.

**VI. Any Other Business**

- Ellen had a few items to report.
  - She expressed her thanks for the custodial gifts. They were much appreciated by the custodial staff!
  - Parent-teacher conferences are important part of community building and building a relationship with the TA. In addition, since they are student-led, the students get to take ownership of their learning.
    - Parents should be getting an email about setting up a time with the TA and the student.
    - In the spring, the conferences will be “arena style”, in which parents can meet with individual teachers one-on-one.
    - One person asked if there might be a way for families to hear from the teachers specifically, and Ellen noted that individual teachers provide individual student feedback to the TA the week before the conferences, which the TA can then provide during the student-led parent-teacher conference.
- Janet Pence, who is the Family Activities chair for the Yorktown High School PTA, wanted to extend invitations to parents of middle school students to join some upcoming events being put on by the YHS PTA:



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- November 15 at 7.30pm: How Executive Functioning Skills Improve Student Success
- Another event relating to Healthy Lifestyles and Wellness will also be held in November.
- Khal asked if there might be a white (or gold) DHMS t-shirt, that could be signed by the classmates of a 6<sup>th</sup> grader who is relocating at the end of the week.
  - Christa indicated that she would look at what stocks are available.
- Memorial weekend field trip
  - Khal indicated that she had a contact at the Marine Corps museum that could provide a more exclusive tour of the facility and a more personalized and age-appropriate presentation to the middle school students. She asked if there were other recommendations of places to visit, but there were no suggestions during the meeting.
  - It was suggested that the weekend before Memorial Day (probably on a Saturday) would be a better day for the field trip since there are likely to be a lot of tourists in town for Memorial Day.
  - The field trip and tour would be free, but PTSA would provide the transportation and catered lunch.
    - Khal had looked into the costs of renting Arlington County buses, which would be around \$325 for 5 hours.
    - Khal would like to use corporate donations to fund the trip.
    - Due to liability concerns and the need to limit driving due to parking limitations, providing bus transportation is preferable.
  - We will need adult chaperones (1 adult: 10 students). We should message the field trip as a family event and an opportunity to meet other families.
- Treasurer's report (*Amy Erwin*)
  - Amy asked if the PTSA typically had a monthly Treasurer's Report at the PTSA meetings. "Yes" was the answer, and it was concluded that the PTSA would like monthly Treasurer's reports and the general membership meetings.
  - Amy presented the budget, which has been reconciled through the end of September.
    - At present the total income is \$8,412, with total expenses of \$3,316, for a net profit of \$5,095.
    - Outstanding checks take our reserves to \$32,691.



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- The one thing of note is that our current fundraising for this 2022-23 school year is behind what was raised last year. By this time last fall, the Phoenix Fund donations totaled \$9,035; this year's donations are much lower, around \$4,840.
- We are hoping for lots of funds to be raised during One DHMS One Week, but other ideas for increasing donations to the Phoenix Fund included:
  - Amending the membership form to explain the connection to One DHMS One Week and the fact that you can donate at any time to satisfy the October fundraising efforts.
  - Reaching out to high donors to encourage them to donate again and keeping track of them so that we can send them personalized thank you notes. Amy will ask Melissa about sending out these thank you notes.
  - Include a link every week in the Phoenix Post for donating to the Phoenix Fund
  - Highlight the special purposes of the funds (e.g., teacher grants, getting on the U.S. Civil Rights Trail)

**VII. Adjournment**

- There was a motion to adjourn, which was seconded. The meeting adjourned at 8.25.

The next PTSA meetings will be held on November 8, 2022.

- The Executive Board meeting will be held at 6:00pm.
- The General Membership Meeting will be held at 7:00pm.