

**CITY OF GREENBELT
ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

Tuesday, October 25, 2016. Meeting was held in the Council Room and presided over by Veronica Martin-Alston. Meeting started at 6:45pm.

PRESENT

ACE Members: Sudhanshu Sinha, Don Rich, Kate McElhenny, Elsie Waynes, Melinda Brady, Veronica Martin-Alston, Leta Mach, Rosalind Ceasar.

PTA Executive

ERHS - Aisha Blaine-Bey (Vice-President)

MES - Shirley Tucker (President), Wanda Howard (Vice-President)

DKFI – Halima Jenkins (President)

GMS – Melinda Brady (Treasurer)

SHL - Moneque Chamberlain Wells (Secretary), Matthew Wells (Treasurer)

Other : Julie Depenbrock (Reporter, GNR), Charlene Mahoney (Vice-Chair, College Park EAC)

ABSENT:

ACE Members: Susan Breon, Jon Gardner, Janet Mirsky, Ema Smith

PTA Presidents: GES, TPA

MEETING WITH PTA PRESIDENTS

After introductions, Veronica, with input from other members, gave an overview of ACE, the grants program, school clubs and awards ceremonies.

Reports from Schools

ERHS – Aisha reported that ERHS has a Teacher’s Appreciation Breakfast coming up soon - they have two other appreciation programs later in the year. She said in light of the county’s decision not to pay for AP testing, the PTSA has decided to fund it this year.

She also informed members that on January 10th the PTSA will hold a meeting to discuss parents’ concern about a cell phone tower being sited at the school. She said the PTSA communicates with parents through its monthly newsletter, emails and text messages.

MES – Shirley and Wanda told members that Magnolia has a Parent-Teacher Advisory Council (PTAC) with an all-new set of officers. They said the PTAC is not part of a larger umbrella organization so this allows them to not charge membership fees. They believe this will encourage parents to join - they had a better turn-out for their 2nd meeting than the 1st.

They reported that they have already completed a fundraising yard sale and are currently working on a Pumpkin-Grams fundraiser. In November, they will hold a family picture day and their crowning event of the year will be the June Family Fun Day.

They had questions about how to obtain liability insurance coverage.

GMS - Melinda told members that there was a break in the PTA because of failure to find new officers at the end of the last school year and so a new board attempted to reconstitute in

September. They are planning a Harvest Dance in the 2nd week of November. They hope it will give the PTA more visibility. She said teachers have been helping with membership drive by creating rewards for classes with the most signed-up parents. She said the PTA also plans to start a novel drive in partnership with Books-a-Million and they are considering a movie night.

DKFI – Halima reported that the PTA’s fundraising activities include restaurant nights, bingo nights, and movie nights. She said that in December they will hold a French book fair in collaboration with a local book seller and Barnes & Noble.

She said they sponsor different after-school school activities e.g. drama, games, chorus.

The PTA has a very active listserv for the whole school and for each grade.

She informed member that the PTA has started a monthly kindness initiative to appreciate staff e.g. this month they provided a list of all staff members and asked parents to send letters, notes etc. to them.

SHL – Moneque and Matthew reported that SHL’s PTA is also finding its footing because the entire board is new. They held their first meeting in September and are still gathering information on how to operate.

Moneque said some activities under consideration are skate night, movie night, and parents’ night out. She also had questions about insurance and so she offered to share any information she found out with the other executives. She said the PTA is looking into joining the national PTA because of their membership benefits.

Matthew shared that he has applied for a grant from the Greenbelt Community Foundation. He said that the foundation emphasized collaboration between schools and so he encouraged other executives to consider applying in the future. Leta added that the Greenbelt Consumer Cooperative also awards a \$1200 grant towards programs that benefits the community

Discussions

Aisha remarked that when the PTSA holds staff appreciation events at ERHS, they reach out and ask parents to donate.

Moneque expressed concern that parents do not get real-time notification when there are school incidents. This was in reference to a lock-down at SHL due to a shooting. Wanda responded that she was informed the school system does not want parents rushing to schools that is why notifications are not sent. Elsie added that there were news flashes on TV when the SHL incident occurred but she it was during working hours when most parents would not be watching TV.

Aisha commented that the school board was looking into the matter because there were complaints last year when ERHS went on lockdown and parents were not notified.

Veronica asked if executives were aware of an app called Remind app. She thought it would be a useful tool for the PTAs. Halima said DKFI used it. She explained briefly how it worked. She said it could be set to allow for one-way or two-way communication and was very useful for sending out last minute notices. Veronica also encouraged executives to encourage their parents to get on PGCPs’ family portal.

Sudhanshu advised executives to include their ACE liaisons on their listservs. He also mentioned that ACE was hoping to start at least other club. Halima asked if a club facilitator had to be a PGCPs staff; if a Reading Club could read in French; and if a school could have more than a

club. Members thought that since DKFI is a French school it made sense for the reading club to be in French and there was precedence for the questions and so they did not see any problems.

Feedback – Members thought it was a great turnout. The noted that most of the schools were struggling to get their organizations started and continued to have problems with parent involvement. In response to Kate’s musing about what ACE could do, Melinda suggested creating a starter kit for PTAs that could be posted on ACE’s website. Veronica commented that the organization needed to be marketed better.

MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

Minutes of September 27th were accepted without amendments.

GRANTS REVIEW

Veronica reminded members that the deadline for submission was November 1. She asked liaisons to get in touch with their schools. Since Jon was not present, there was no information on deadlines and procedures.

UPDATES

Don visited College Park Education Advisory Committee. He said the main agenda that day was the review and award of grants. He reported that their grants were \$2000 - \$2500 each. He said he noted that GMS did not apply for a grant.

He also reported that the EAC also awarded eight \$200 scholarships to students towards summer camps at UMD. Awarded students got the opportunity to read their scholarship essays at a council meeting.

Melinda said she has been in communication with Berwyn Heights Education Advisory Committee and they are excited about collaborating with ACE. She said the architectural design competition is rescheduled for February 2 or February 25. BH would like ACE to co-sponsor the event - help with snacks for volunteers, recruiting students, advertising etc. Melinda volunteered to serve during the competition. It was decided that since many members were absent, no decision would be made on co-sponsoring.

AOB

Rosalind shared that SHL was looking for volunteers to act as election officers during their mock election, and asked any interested members to respond to SHL’s email.

Leta also reported that Council has written to the school board regarding school assignments as a follow-up to the meeting with PGCPS. She said she will represent the city at a meeting on Thursday.

NEXT MEETING

The meeting ended at 8:30pm. The next meeting is scheduled for December 6.