

Pine Hill CSA Meeting Minutes

Zoom Meeting

November 4, 2020

Present: Tara Hourihan, Royale Abrams, Crista Mahoney, Hannah Ireland, Allison Gullingsrud, Kaitlin Dunham, Kristen Susco, Nikki Miller, Peter Rovick, Dr. Brown, Irene Saranteas Bassalee, Ranjini Dowley, Molly Cullum, Katie Garvey, Elizabeth Speyer, Rory McGrath, Aimee Cronin, Chinar Dara

Absent: Lynn Frigiani

Call To Order

Meeting began at 12:32pm.

President's Report - Tara Hourihan and Royale Abrams

- Website Update: We are in the process of switching platforms for the website, so once it is up and running we can get other initiatives online.
- Spirit Wear Sale: We want this ready for the holiday season, so Tara and Royale are talking to John about adding things to the website and advertising this through the website.
- School Directory Update: Directory is ready to go out, but we are wary of launching it on two different platforms as we switch the website. It will go live when the website is up.
- Tara and Royale received an email from a Pine Hill parent about helping children in DCF. A great idea for a philanthropy. They will send out a signup genius about adopting families to support through the holidays as a community. Co-Presidents are looking into it to move forward.

Vice President's Report - No Report

Principal's Update - Dr. Brown

- Dr. Brown received a thank you note from a DS Alum who received the CSA scholarship, which she will put in the CSA mailbox.
- Dr. Brown gave an update on Phase II rollout. Getting the car line in and out quickly is challenging, so Monday the school finally got permission from all town officials to use the access road for busses. They are hopeful that will help with traffic challenges (blind spots on the driveway, etc). Although the drop-off for the Monday/Tuesday cohort is different from the Tuesday/Thursday cohort, they were able to take 4 minutes off of the pickup time yesterday, and will continue to have clear boundaries around what parents/students can and can't do.
- Dr. Brown shared how the density inside the building feels comfortable with the ways things have been arranged in hallways and dining areas. Although there was some concern that the changes would make the school feel sterile and lose the heart of Pine

Hill, there is a great energy coming through when you look at the kids. They have worked hard to balance guidelines with the traditional joyous experiences at school, and ongoing process for the faculty, staff, and administrators.

- The school is planning for Phase III, hoping and preparing to bring back grades 4 and 5 in early December.
- As usual, the Monday after Thanksgiving continues to be a faculty workshop day, with opportunities for teacher collaboration and a deep dive into English Language Arts and Social Studies with a culturally proficient lens. Considering events around our country (racism and antiracism), Dr. Brown shared that the district is reviewing social justice standards and places they have fallen short. DS schools continue to work around cultural proficiency, and educators are helping students to look critically at what voices are NOT being heard. For example, the Old Sherborn Unit is from a white perspective, but what about Native American and Black perspective?
- Vice Principal Allison Gullingsrud shared that the new teachers are working together in a cohort with coaching from Jen Ryan for professional development. This new cohort brings excitement, energy, and positivity to the whole faculty.
- Co-President Royale Abrams shared that the CSA will provide lunch for the faculty during their November 30th in-service day. She will be in touch with details and logistics. Dr. Brown shared that the district has already lined up the New England Coffee truck to come to each school for free.

Committee Updates

Events - Molly Cullum and Hannah Ireland

Events is planning fun events for kids to take the place of the Ice Cream Social and Pancake Breakfast as a thank you to families. These events will be free, and help families keep the CSA in mind. This winter there may be a Snowman Making Contest. Kids can submit a photo, the winner will be voted upon or selected, prize will be a gift card or tshirt. In the spring there may be a Scavenger Hunt/Geo-caching event in the Sherborn community with clues and a prize for the winner. This event would get kids outside, and is also a free event. Meg Seigel will talk with Molly and Hannah about partnering with the Sustainability Council for the scavenger hunt.

Events also wants to host fun adult events, so Hannah's brother (a chef) will offer a 1-1½ hour cooking class during the winter, price TBD. Hannah will be the moderator, have polls going to keep it interactive. Another idea is to have a Buy-One-Get-One class with Bully Boy (One class with teachers, one with parents). It would include mocktails, so it can be family friendly.

For the big fundraiser this year, the Events will look to have a bigger campaign tied to more tangible items with concrete goals (Broadmoor, outdoor classroom, enrichment, etc.). We want to capitalize on end-of-year giving, so we will use "21K for 2021". Students can earn extra recess, PJ Day, or something like that as prizes. The CSA needs to remind people we are still here, we still have a budget, and this won't be forever. We want to get momentum from parents

to donate. We will work on a clever, positive pitch, and there is some discussion on how to best roll this out (Go Fund Me, One Cause platform from auction, to make it easy to donate, etc.). One incentive could be that at end of the Winter fundraiser, no matter what a family donates, each child gets extra raffle tickets for Raffle Baskets. Royale suggested that we pitch to a broader audience because past Pine Hill families have asked about supporting the CSA. Hannah suggested that they can use social media for that, as well as sending an email blast to current families, and posting on IG, Facebook, Nextdoor, etc.). Aimee shared that we can use our new website easily for this, and we can create groups to target audiences. The end goal is \$40K this year.

Communications - Elizabeth Speyer and Aimee Cronin

Communications has been working on an email for the online directory launch, and is almost ready to launch the new website. There was a payment option added from Chinar recently. Aimee presented the new website to the board. They still need images for the website because the layout is image-rich. Dr. Brown said she can take photos with the help of a student. Anyone with photos can email them to communications@pinehillsschoolcsa.org. Aimee highlighted that the Calendar function can be used to promote things on homepage. The Directory can be ordered directly from the website, and we can collect information of who has ordered easily in case we need the information. They still need to sync payment options and make the website live, which could be later today or this week. Aimee has asked that all board members submit a photo so there is a visual of board members on the website. The CSA Store is currently named "Digital Directory" to encourage people to order directories and make it easier to find, but it will be easy to change the name and add things into the store. She will also include a Spirit Wear link after coordination with John Cavaliero, BoxTops, and Amazon Smile details on the homepage, as well as any other fundraisers we want to highlight. This would be a good place to showcase class competitions. The new website will be good for tracking money/events. There is also a Volunteer Section where we can include volunteer forms to connect volunteers to the right contact person. Aimee said we can hide what is not ready and launch the website soon.

Treasurer - Dr. Chinar Dara

Chinar submitted the finalized budget for approval, which was sent out with meeting minutes, and included the change to enrichment funds which created a single bucket for all grade-level programs after last meeting's conversations. Enrichment Committee had budget questions about how to address teacher desires for grade level programs (see update below).

Enrichment - Lynn Frigiani and Kaitlin Dunham

Enrichment reached out to teachers and all of them want to do some sort of enrichment. The budget however was reduced to one program per grade this year. Two programs per grade would be ideal. Parents may be expecting the budget to remain the same as years past, so perhaps we should give them the opportunity to chip in. For example, David Kaufman plays the

recorder for 3rd graders. He will do a virtual program (still \$700), but that would be the only program for the average \$800 budget per grade. Can we fundraise for something specifically, have targeted funds for anything over \$800? Perhaps ask parents to help subsidize if they can. Chickering is still doing all programs they can, as long as they're virtual. In addition, Lynn is looking into the Assembly programs for All School Meeting, hoping for 2 this year. There is \$4000 in budget for assemblies. Aimee suggests we research local organizations and/or parents who have knowledge to organize free/inexpensive enrichments (Unity Farm, Yacht Club, FOTSL, Garden clubs for plant units, etc.)

There was conversation about asking parents to pitch in, versus dipping into our savings. Ultimately, it was decided that the grade level budget can use excess money from the assemblies budget - if there is any - since they are both included under enrichment. After the enrichment budget is expended there is savings that can be used to cover additional curriculum based enrichment programs. Using additional savings will need to be approved.

New Families - Nikki Miller and Rory McGrath

New Families has matched all new families with a PH cohort family. Kindergarten room parents are acting as a match, and we are also matching individual students with classmates. Nikki and Rory will follow up with volunteers to make sure they've been in touch with their new families.

Q & A zooms are still in process. Kindergarten room parents can organize, but the question is do we do with other grades? They will rely on CSA board members to participate. They are working on details to coordinate and schedule, likely using room parents as points of contact Katie Garvey shared that this is actually part of the room parent responsibility this year.

Family Friends - Irene Saranteas Bassalee and Ranjini Dowley

Family Friends is planning a Family Friend Zoom, with trivia this time around to improve attendance. They are hoping to arrange playdates at Pine Hill, but this is on hold because of Covid. Family Friends would also like to raise money to purchase blankets for bus rides. \$20 blankets and will reach out to Family Friends directly for that. Someone raised the question : Does CSA have enough money to cover this? 7 students, \$140 total.

Volunteers - Katie Garvey

Reaching out to new families is now part of the responsibilities for room parents in grades 1-5. Katie is willing to help coordinate volunteers for anything anyone needs.

Pine Hill 5K Update - Kristen Aberle and Karen Silver

Karen sent an update: 108 people participated in the 5K this year. They raised \$2500, \$1900 after expenses. They are hoping to do it again, and will look into how to utilize sponsorships and donations in new ways.

School Directory - Molly Cullum and Katie Garvey

School directory update was covered in Communications. The directory will launch once the new website is live.

Pine Hill Garden - Julie Dreyfus and Kristen Susco

Julie reached out to each teacher about how they could collaborate. She had the following response:

- Kindergarten teachers asked for one big pumpkin and carving tools per classroom.
- Grade 1 was interested in collaborating in the spring.
- Grade 3 could fill the bird feeders, do Bird Garden cleanup. Also interested in creating QR codes for plants in the Bird Garden.
- Grade 4 asked for tulips for every student to dissect.
- Grade 5 did not have much that matched up with their curriculum.

Julie shared the history of the Michael Lisnow Bird Garden (**see notes below for more detailed information**). It is a great example of #WeareDS and Pine Hill culture. 20 years ago, the CSA was doing the same thing we are now creating an outdoor classroom space. The Bird Garden is a usable space, but currently not well-maintained. Julie proposes that the PH Garden Coordinator takes on the Bird Garden as well. She would like to do a full survey of plants currently there, take out invasive species, and do a mild pruning. This would require limited effort and hours. The hope would be to make the space more interpretive to make it more relevant for grades 2-4 in a discussion of the ecology of space. Dr. Brown commented that Eagle Scouts helped out in the past, and Irene suggested the landscaper who has a business on Main Street, as a way of connecting to the Sherborn community.

Julie also proposed that at some point during the school year, either in October for the anniversary of the garden's dedication, or some other point in the year, the CSA adds a section to our weekly newsletter sharing Michael's life story. Michael's story captures the spirit of the PH community and the #WeAreDS culture, which is acceptance, support, and hope through kindness and community. We could also use this opportunity to educate families about the existence and purpose of the Bird Garden. Perhaps we could ask the School Council to share the story of Michael's life at All School Meeting, in conjunction with our newsletter.

Additional notes regarding the Pine Hill Garden are attached to these meeting minutes.

Box Tops and Amazon Smile - Peter Rovick

Because of meeting length, Peter had to leave but e-mailed the following update after the meeting:

There is very low BTFE participation so far - averaged only 12 scanned receipts each of the last 4 weeks - need your help to foster participation.

Asking all CSA Board Members to lead by example. For BTFE, start the habit of scanning your grocery receipts each week (do it right before unpacking the groceries so it's not forgotten). If you need help - Peter will gladly walk you through it (Peter - mobile: 781.264.4868)

<https://smile.amazon.com/> CSA board members should use this website for each Amazon purchase that you make and set up the Pine Hill CSA as your cause (although Peter fully respects if you have another preferred cause).

Peter is asking CSA Board Members to help verbally promote these two programs to fellow PH parents (at soccer games, at The Heritage, on play-dates, social gatherings, etc.)

Be able to share your success stories....e.g.

- "I used smile.amazon.com for \$300 in holiday purchases - the money adds up if we all do it."
- "I started scanning BTFE recently, earning about 30 cents each week, it's small, but it adds up...and the kids love seeing the confetti drop on the phone screen when we submit each receipt.....And it's a great opportunity to practice giving back to their community."

Addressing two key questions:

- Why should I help? (BTFE, Amazon Smile....or the CSA in general)
- Where does the money go?

I think it would be very helpful to address these two questions on the new website - and utilize the Fundraising page to highlight programs which need funding.

Other Business - Tara Hourihan

Because of meeting length, there was not a quorum to vote on the minutes or budget at the end of the meeting. Next Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, Dec. 3 @ 7pm.

Adjournment

Motion to Adjourn at 2:08pm

History of the Bird Garden

- Garden site was originally a grass covered hillside
- In 1999 a volunteer at the school heard about a bird observation garden at a nearby school and brought up the idea with Principal David Nihill who supported the idea of an “outdoor classroom” at PH
- This volunteer found a garden designer (David Schworer) to design and install the outdoor classroom pro-bono
- The Sawin Fund financed the project
- Installation of the garden began in spring of 2000
- A backhoe was used to regrade the hillside, bringing boulders over the hill from PH Cemetery to imbed in the hillside and stabilize the slope
- Primarily native plants were used, focusing on bird attracting shrubs, trees and perennials
- On October 13th, 2000 the garden was formally dedicated to Michael Lisnow
- From 2001-2006 the Boggestow Garden Club (BGC) coordinated and oversaw maintenance of the Bird Garden by hiring landscape contractors, to prune, mulch and mow, using CSA funds. (Receipts were submitted to the CSA for reimbursement)
- I could not find documentation if there was an agreement of responsibilities made by the CSA and the BGC prior to the construction of the garden
- By the 2004-2005 school year the CSA expressed concern that the expenses for garden maintenance were exceeding the budget (no documentation of a clear line item)
- At the beginning of the 2005 school year the CSA reached out to the BGC expressing their appreciation for the Bird Garden as a valuable education tool and indicated annual funds would be allocated for the garden’s maintenance
- During the 2005-2006 school year the CSA budgeted \$3000 towards the Bird Garden and hired a landscaper to prune, mulch and mow the space; however in spring a BGC volunteer noted the quality of work done by the landscaper was marginal, causing some of the trees and shrubs to die. At this point the relationship between the CSA and the BGC seems to turn sour.

- In 2006 the BGC stopped overseeing the garden and handed it over to the school and CSA. I have not found anything indicating collaboration between the CSA and BGC since.
- Today the DPW subcontracts out mowing in the Bird Garden (and surrounding lawn). It does not appear any maintenance is done on the garden aside from mowing.

Lessons Learned/ Key Take-Aways

- I am encouraged that the proposed Outdoor Classroom and Garden will have lasting value and utility at PH based on the history of the Bird Garden. The Bird Garden has been used by 3rd grade classes for the past 20 years, despite 15 years of bare minimal maintenance, no consistent oversight, and limited funding. Given the scaffolding developed for the proposed Outdoor Classroom, as well as the school wide curriculum connections, I feel encouraged that the new garden space will serve the community well for years to come.
- Communication must be clear as to who is responsible for what tasks, when, and with what financial assurances. Any community connections must be defined at the onset.

Proposed Action for Discussion

- The CSA takes on responsibility for the Bird Garden under the Garden Coordinator Position. Now that the CSA has a dedicated position that naturally aligns with this space, it makes sense to ensure the garden can continue to be used by the 3rd grade, and even made better.
- The Bird Garden lacks key interpretation for classes to better understand the ecology of the garden. The Garden Coordinator would be responsible for overseeing these interpretive elements, in coordination with the 3rd grade teachers. I would suggest plant labels and/or QR codes, so students (and community members) could learn more about the interaction between native plants and birds. This is also a component of the 2nd grade science curriculum and consistent with the educational goals for the proposed Outdoor Classroom and Learning Lab.
- I do not suggest changing the current maintenance paid for and organized by the DPW; rather organizing a garden clean up day in the fall and spring with 3rd grade classes and parent volunteers. Clean-up meaning taking out invasive species and any plants that have died, and replacing them

with new plants if need be. The garden has naturalized over the years and it is not necessary to replace every plant that dies. The 3rd grade teachers would like to participate in garden clean up, new plantings, and interpretation.

- I also propose the CSA budgets funds to supplement plantings as old perennials and shrubs die off. The budget would also include supplies needed for educational interpretation of the space.
- Both the man hours and money required have to be minimal, manageable, and clearly defined. I plan on doing a full site assessment (hopefully with support from BGC), to create a more detailed proposal of what could be done to improve the space along with a suggestion for a realistic budget. I do not think we can or should maintain the garden to the high standards originally kept by the BGC.

Who was Michael Lisnow?

Michael Lisnow was a resident of Sherborn and student at PH. Michael was born in 1986, 16 weeks premature. He was born with extensive brain damage, causing him to be mute, blind, and unable to walk for his entire life. Michael attended school at PH, and made a lasting impression on staff and students with his “positive heart and warming spirit”. He was described as a joyous, loving and determined child who made friends with anyone who met him. Michael passed away in 1996, at the age of 10, after coping with life-long illness. The Bird Garden was dedicated in his honor because of the positive impact he made on our school community.

Proposal for the Board: At some point during the school year, either in October for the anniversary of the garden’s dedication, or some other point in the year, the CSA adds a section to our weekly newsletter sharing Michael’s life story. Michael’s story captures the spirit of the PH community and the #WeAreDS culture, which is acceptance, support, and hope through kindness and community. We could also use this opportunity to educate families about the existence and purpose of the Bird Garden. Perhaps we could ask the School Council to share the story of Michael’s life at All School Meeting, in conjunction with our newsletter.