

MHS Home & School Association
Meeting Minutes
September 10, 2020 (via Zoom)

In Attendance:

Kelly Alexander	Shane Bone	Beth Cavanaugh	Sue Coffin
Dana Defilippis	Shawntel Ford	Shawn Freeman	Michelle Greenawalt
Tamara Guagliata	Cindy Hartson	Miguel Jaimes	Kristy Jones
Debra Knowby	Marie Kramer	Courtney Kusy	Colleen Kutz
Laurie O'Neill	Kate Pack	Imelda Pelingon	Michelle Petko
Sophia Pham	Sheeja Saradabai	Rozet Shirozian	Melissa Smith
Jason Sorgini	Sarah Spletzer	Linda Valle	Mercy Varghese
	Gabby Winters	Aliza Zebrowski	

Welcome – Introductions – Marie shared quick instructions on Zoom and how the meeting would go. She also introduced the Board.

MHS Staff Reports

Principal – Jason Sorgini – Dr. Sorgini reported:

- The first 3 days of school are done, and by and large they went well. The schedule seems to be working. There have been some hiccups, but good things are happening with Zoom. We are continuing to build the community in the virtual environment.
- Hopefully parents have seen the videos he's sent out. Communication is especially important in the virtual environment. He is sending out High School Happenings by email as well as videos, every other week. The next video will come out on Sept. 17th. There will be other forms of communication coming out on a regular basis, through the PowerSchool Portal or classroom information. He sent out a brief welcome video on the first day of school to each of the four class levels.
 - Dr. Kochenour will be communicating soon regarding senior pictures. Some communications are directly with students, since this is high school and these are young adults.
 - Every year since he's been in education, one of the best nights is Back to School night. The Back to School night this year on Sept. 16th will be in this virtual environment. Some info on that: communications will go out to parents about how the evening will work, along with a schedule. The night will have synchronous opportunities, available by Zoom links which will be provided by teachers.
 - With not doing the second night of Back to School that we usually do, what if you can't be there? There will be Information coming out on Sept. 15th about that as well. Teachers may do separate recordings, and should have archived videos of their Sept. 16th presentations by Sept. 18th. So, parents who can't make the presentations on the 16th will have the opportunity to see what their child's teacher presented.
 - Back to School night will be a chance for teachers to present on content progression, grading practices, syllabus and how to continue communication. It is not an opportunity for individual communications with teachers about your student.
 - Next week we will share some information about the PSAT. MHS is very fortunate in that we have Board/Administrative support for offering the PSAT to sophomores as well as juniors. The PSAT would have been given on October 14th this year. But, we've discovered issues with providing the test to 800 students in an environment that would be conducive for this high stakes test.

- College Board has offered an alternative date of January 26th for PSAT administration and MHS will take advantage of this alternative date.
- Regarding qualifying for National Merit Scholarship semi-finalist, juniors taking the PSAT in January will still be eligible for this scholarship opportunity. Perk Valley, Upper Dublin and Lower Merion are doing the January administration. Spring Ford and North Penn are still doing the October administration. Information on this will be coming out officially next week.
- For activities and social events, we want parents to know that administrators and staff at MHS are working with student council and class sponsors at each level to discuss how clubs and social events might take place.
- Home & School meetings are a good place to clear up rumors. We heard that Phoenixville high school was hosting a breakfast for seniors this year. With the gathering limitations of 250 people still in place, this would not be possible for MHS, and generally speaking this sort of event is not going to be a school sanctioned event. Such an event would violate all the current restrictions in place.
- We hope things will change this year and we will be able to have in person events – he does care and when he has to say “no” to holding an event, it’s because he cares. For now we’ll be looking for safe opportunities to come together.
- Thrilled to be working with the parent group. He is not only a principal but also a parent. He is starting over with a freshman, so he is also a parent here at the HS. He understands acutely what is going on, and cares deeply.
- Questions?

Michelle Petko mentioned that she is parent to a sophomore and senior – and is happy Dr. Sorgini is talking about these tests. She asked about whether the October 3rd SAT is still happening on campus. Dr. Sorgini confirmed that the district still plans on hosting the October 3rd SAT.

Gabby Winters asked about Google classroom – whether she as a parent has to do anything? Dr. Sorgini replied that no, parents should get a guardian summary at certain intervals and that the district auto-populates for those summaries.

There was also an attendance question, Dr. Sorgini reported that there is a synchronous, real-time attendance component as well as attendance assignment, and that attendance does not have to be taken at a particular time. They have left it up to the teachers when they take attendance and what an attendance assignment looks like. The engagement component is important in the virtual learning environment as well. It may look different in every classroom, and sometimes it can be frustrating but it is better to allow for some discretion on how teachers do this.

Mercy Varghese asked about Google classroom – that she is no longer getting summaries but used to. Dr. Sorgini responded to have your child let his or her teacher know.

- It is going to be a great year, it will be ok. Kids are resilient.

Teachers – Cara Woudenberg – no report provided

Counseling – Cindy Hartson – Mrs. Hartson reported:

- We have a new Guidance Counselor Leeann Dacri. Along with the addition, we looked at distribution and ratios. There were some uneven matches, so we have a new realignment and alpha split: Mr. Peck has seniors and underclass A-CI; Mrs. Henning has seniors Co-G and underclass Cm to Go; Dacri has seniors H-LI and underclass Gp-Ko; Mr. Ruminski has seniors Lo-Pa and underclass Kr-O; Mr. Howard has seniors Pe-Sr and underclass P-Sr; and, Mrs. Hartson has seniors and underclass St-Z.
- We also have a new Career Counselor, Kim Kulp K-12.
- Counselors will be going into senior English classes Monday. They touched base a week before we went out this March. They will be going over the college application again – including

Naviance, career options and military. She just sent an email out to students about college fairs starting as early as next week. Students should look at virtualcollegefairs.org. Currently there are fairs scheduled for: 9/13, 10/12, 10/18, 11/8. Anything we find out about, we will be posting for the students.

- How should students make an appointment to see their counselor? Email counselor directly or email our secretaries.
- Guidance will be hosting its annual Financial Aid Night virtually on October 15th. Ms. Bonnie Vane from Villanova will be joining. FAFSA completion night still may happen. Or we may be able to present and then allow parents to go off and work on FAFSA themselves.
- College representative visits are coming back. Colleges will Zoom with the students. Students will let teachers know where they are. These have only have been posted for 3 days, and already 21 colleges have signed up.
- Every year we receive PSAT student guides. We'll be giving them out or talking about how best to share them with students prior to the test.
- Questions?

Michelle Petko – glad to hear everything you said and appreciate it. When you talk about going in to classrooms about what kids should be doing, how hands on is this? Has there been any thought about workshops, talking to 40-50 students at a time to help them with what they should be doing? Does what you do in the classroom suffice as that? Mrs. Hartson replied that for the last 3 years, guidance offered “operation college application rescue” after school and no one really came. Follow up questions/discussion about holding senior meetings with all of students or having open forums after Monday Zoom meetings? Mrs. Hartson stated maybe they would do something like assigning a counselor with after school hours and also replied that guidance does do workshops and meetings, just on a smaller scale, and that it is much more difficult in the virtual environment. She will add “operation college application rescue” to her agenda.

H&S Reports:

Secretary – Sarah Spletzer – Sarah reported:

- We currently have 655 families signed up for Konstella, an increase over last year's 627.
- Marie talked about how to sign up for Konstella.

Treasurer – Courtney Kusy – Courtney reported:

- We have \$3,723.68 to start the year. Our proposed budget for the school year is the list of budgeted numbers shown.
- For fundraising we still need to decide about whether we will do No Frills. We may consider Venmo this year as a payment method if we run the fundraiser.
- Last year's No Frills fundraiser brought in almost \$9,600.00.
- We received a check today for \$2,128.00 for the APlus rewards through Giant. Marie noted that it's a great turnout for APlus but unfortunately they've cancelled the program.
- A question was raised about the Self-Defense line item in the budget – Marie explained that we pay for a self-defense class given by an outside vendor for junior girls, which has now expanded to include boys. Mrs. Hartson asked about the amount of funds in the student loan fund that is being discontinued. Our understanding is that it is around \$40,000.00.
- Marie noted that the budget will likely have to be adjusted this year, and that we didn't send our usual letter out to families this summer because of Covid.

Vice President – Gabby Winters/Michelle Petko – Michelle and Gabby reported:

- Gabby saw a grant program where Home & School pays for seniors application fee to one “reach” school per student.

Presidents – Mercy Varghese/Marie Kramer – Mercy and Marie reported:

- Virtual Social Events – if we do continue online, we should be trying to come up with ideas for virtual events. Yoga after school? Cooking class? Trivia night? Please send us an email with any ideas you may have.
- Mercy regarding the Winning Warriors awards, that Mr. Sussman doesn't really have a way to give out the prizes and that he thought we should pass for this year unless we can come up with a way to select winning warriors and distribute the prizes. We discussed pausing for September and October. Gabby commented that she thinks teachers can tell through Zoom who is deserving of these awards.
- Student Loan Program – as a quick recap, the program is terminating now, but was started in the 1960s to give MHS seniors interest free loans from \$400-\$1000 depending on funds and the number of applicants. Maybe there were 25 applicants per year, and given that they paid the loan back, usually this was a continuing cycle. Over the years, all the schools' Home & School groups were contributing. Up until about 2014 when everyone stopped putting money in the pot. The administrative time and effort involved in running the program was enormous. Eventually it was going to run out of money anyway. MCC is trying to help figure out where the money would go. The ideas that the high school Home & School proposed were, switch to a grant program, HS seniors would get a couple hundred as a grant. After a couple years the money would run out and that would be that. Some options on the table are to return the money to H&Ss, or donate it to the backpack program or to assistance for families at the holidays,

District Reports:

SEA – Colleen Kutz – Colleen reported:

- If your child has an IEP or 504 we're the group for you. Special Education Alliance is a parent run group that provides social and educational opportunities for students and parents.
- We have two upcoming virtual events: on Oct. 15th, Dr. Ann Marie Licata will talk to us about Inclusion for K-12 and Beyond, at 7 pm – 9 pm via Zoom Meeting. On Nov. 19th Kathy Opperman, founder and President of Empowering U, will talk to us about managing our stress and taking care of ourselves, also at 7 pm via Zoom.
- SEA is on FaceBook, at the Special Education Alliance of MCC, and can be contacted at SEAmethacton@gmail.com.

Post Prom – Gabby Winters/ Lisa Coupe – Gabby and Lisa reported:

- We're just trying to figure out how to navigate Post Prom for this year, given Covid. Post Prom is a huge event, we spent all of last year planning and didn't have it. We're not sure how much more we can do this year and possibly have all of these events not happen again.
- Our first meeting is in October. Planning starts in July and August. We're committed to moving forward, but there is a lot of uncertainty.
- For freshman parents and parents new to MHS, Post Prom is a 501c3, we host an all night event right after prom, roughly 800 students and their dates attend. We have activities going on all night. We have around a 50k budget and need around 400 volunteers that night to make it happen. Our mission is to keep kids safe. Sometimes we even have more kids at Post Prom than prom.

School Board – (report)

- Welcome back to school! The board has been working hard over the summer with administration to ensure a quality Methacton education in the midst of the pandemic.
- To help out families in need over the summer, the board worked with the Methacton Education Foundation and other community donors to secure grants to provide food for our families in need in the district. Each month, the board procured, packed and distributed food and gift cards totaling over \$20,000 and distributed gift cards as well.
- As you may have seen, meals are now provided at no charge to all Methacton students. You can pick up meals for your children on Tuesdays and Thursdays at the Skyview/Arcola campus.
- The Methacton Backpack program will continue in even while we are in a virtual environment, with guidance counselors working with families to identify need.
- In August, the board approved the hiring of Matthew Walsh as our new curriculum director. Mr. Walsh comes to us from the Wissahickon School District and his tentative start date will be in October.
- Also in August, we had a presentation around the furloughing of support and custodial staff. Fortunately, with the new student services center that will be starting and the acceleration of routine maintenance projects, we did not have to furlough staff members.
- The board recently formed an ad hoc committee to explore issues in the district around diversity, equity and inclusion. Updates from this ad hoc committee will be included at future board meetings.
- An Act 34 hearing was held virtually and at Arcola Intermediate School on Tuesday, September 8 for the purpose of hearing feedback regarding the Arrowhead building project. There is still time to provide your thoughts to the board about this project by emailing Mary Mandia at mmandia@methacton.org to share your feedback. All written testimony must be received by 4pm on Thursday, October 8.
- Board meetings are now being held virtually on zoom and live streamed through YouTube. Please join us at our upcoming meetings:
Work Session: Tuesday, September 22, 7:00 PM
Regular Meeting: Tuesday, September 29, 7:00 PM
Check the website for login information and instructions on presenting comments to the board at the meeting.
- Thank you for all you do! Any questions or comments, feel free to reach out to me or to any board member. Liz Drummond edrummond@methacton.org

MEF – (report)

- For those who don't already know, the Methacton Education Foundation is a charitable organization that funds innovative educational programming in Methacton School District.
- Thanks to generous donations from individuals and businesses in the community, the Foundation is able to support enrichment programs for STEM, Student Wellness, Career Development, and Economically Disadvantaged Students.
- Since 2009, the Foundation has raised over \$1 Million and there is so much more to do.
- Over the last several years, the Foundation has invested over \$130,000 at the High School alone for programs that give our students an advantage like the Music Technology Course, Driver's Education Simulators, Laptops, CAD software, and a CNC Machine for the Engineering Courses, and DNA Molecular Separation Instructional Lab Kits.
- To learn more about the Methacton Education Foundation visit MethactonFoundation.org.

MCC – Marie Kramer – Marie reported:

- MCC is having a meeting on Monday to go over the student loan fund. Our board will talk about what we think should be happening with that money.

Questions & Answers – as time allows:

- Sophia Pham asked if there is information about whether sports or clubs are going to pick up at some point? What is the plan for that? Dr. Sorgini explained that more information would be available in the next 2 weeks or so

Adjournment: we try to keep meetings within an hour, 2nd Thursday of the month on Zoom.

Dates to Remember:

16 – Back to School Night (virtual)

28 – No School (Holiday)

October

8 – H&S Meeting – 7:00pm

Next meeting 10/8/20 7:00pm

Via Zoom

(Look for Konstella announcement or our webpage for registration link)