

RIDGE H.S.A. INC.  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING  
MEETING DATE: March 12, 2019 at 1:15 pm  
TEACHER'S LOUNGE

**BOARD MEMBERS:** Albano, Beck, Beiersdorf, Bender, Briganti, Brinkman, Bruno, Chudy, Daffron, Doerfel, Dowling, Flynn, Geller, Gershenson, Gross, Harrington, Harris, Hong, Hutchinson, Kahn, Kahn, Katzman, Kong, Langheim, Lindenberg, Losquadro, McCarthy, McLeod, Micale, Monte, Neumann, O'Keefe, Patrawala, Pilchik, Rosenberg, Rozenberg, Rubine, Saggari, Sandora, Singh, Sorabella, Stephens, Strohmenger, Sturmfels, Sullivan, Tobacawala, Tudda, Turner, Twilliger, Wall, Wallace, Wright

**PRESENT:** Pilchik, Wallace, Kahn, Twilliger, Patrawala, Dowling, Gershenson, Katzman, Langheim, Kong

**ABSENT BUT VOTING:** Albano, Beiersdorf, Kong, Chudy, Lindenberg, Singh, Harrington, Bender, Harris, Sandora, McCarthy, Micale, Neumann, Geller, Strohmenger, Briganti, Rubine, Gross

**Motion:**

- 1. A motion was made, seconded and approved by those present to approve the Minutes from the January 15, 2019 Ridge H.S.A. meeting.**
- 2. A motion was made, seconded and approved by those present to approve the Balance Sheet as of March 12, 2019 and the 2018/2019 Year-To-Date Profit & Loss Statement.**

**WELCOME & CALL TO ORDER**

Hilary Wallace

Hilary Wallace, H.S.A. President, welcomed attendees and called the meeting to order at 1:17 pm.

**Board of Education Budget Presentation**

Antoinette Kelly, Business Administrator, is here with Dr. Fishbein to present the preliminary budget. This is the first budget that she prepared with Dr. Fishbein and please raise your hand for questions. We have a web site if you have any questions moving forward. She read the Mission Statement slide. What is school budget? Its a planning tool. We look at this year but also ahead at initiatives that are continuing or starting. Not just one year, but beyond that we think about future years. Also trying to manage risk and plan for the unknown while trying to be fiscally responsible and staying within the caps (2%) that we need to. We continue with our mission, so the budget reflects educational values and programs, and also our contractual obligations.

Looking at Expenditure slide, then Revenues, then specific things for next year.

Expenditure category highlights: Special education budget is decreasing. Not because we are cutting it, we have worked hard to provide programs for children in house instead of sending them out and this translates into savings. Benefits went down in cost. The BoE puts in 10% based on recommendations from a health benefit agent. Rates fluctuate so to make sure we have enough money to pay for premium, we are putting in 10% for the second half of year. We are down in capital because we are budgeting less than for this year. Debt service is also down for next year. We have retired some older bonds, that's why our budget is less. Overall everyone will be going up .58% for next year. *Question*: Are extracurriculars down? We haven't eliminated anything, just shifting of funding.

Budget pie chart: Salaries and benefits are almost 70% of the budget. For a public school budget, we don't have a lot of discretionary funds to use. You have statutory requirements for special students, transportation, etc. We are limited in those types of funds. We work hard when putting the budget together to include new initiatives and keep old ones in place.

Budget breakdown slide: For the revenue slide we are asking, how are we paying for this? Last night we had preliminary budget approval from the board. The board decided to give back \$150,000 through tax levy. We got 7.95% in additional state aid. Some will be used to reduce the tax levy and the rest will go to reduce the budget. We are down in miscellaneous revenue for next year. In this current year we received energy rebates and are collecting most of them this year. Next year won't be as significant. Our total local source of revenue is down 1.19% and state aid is up. Grants and entitlements, we don't find out until the summer. We budgeted the same as this year. And the rest is reserves that we are using. Next yer using \$1.4 million in capital reserve. Keeping some in fund balance and also have \$300,000 emergency reserves. Debt service is down 14%.

History of state aid: slide shows progression of state aid. We received \$3.3 million in 2007/8 and then went down progressively. In 2010/11 everyone lost state aid and it has taken us up to this year to recover and come back to original year amounts.

Loss of state aid slide: have lost \$12.4 million in state aid over the years since 2007/8.

Dr. Fishbein takes a couple of slides: Looking at the curriculum update, we will write some new courses in the summer and use them in the fall. We will renew some book licenses in 6-8 grades and also K-12 music is being looked at using a music technology program. K-5 social studies will look at curriculum and renew site licenses for textbooks. Science will have new curriculum updates which will include new training. For world languages, we have been buying new textbooks so we have a common format in all languages.

Antoinette continued with a slide on AP course offerings in high school. Also, extracurricular activities including athletics, 100 plus activities for after school.

New staffing this year: In this budget there is allotment for 3 elementary school guidance counselors. Dr. Fishbein is meeting with elementary principals and we felt it was a good time to provide more support with guidance counselors. 7 high school teachers are going from part time to full time. 2 behaviorists will be on board, one for the Glen School and one district-wide. They will replace Bergen County Special Services, who currently provides those services. New class at Glen School; adding RED Rise teacher; providing a nurse at Glen School; taking part time PT to full time; new BF School Sail teacher; and new school resource officers which will be a shared service between Ridgewood and BoE.

Technology: We have five year leases and each year renew a new lease. Each year it's the same amount of money which gives us \$940,000 in purchasing power. Most of the budget is software and licensing. Major ones are: Skyward, Wifi and security software, also maintenance of accounting, budget, payroll and HR system, Microsoft licenses. Also includes central station and monitoring for fire alarm and security. This year we purchased a lockdown and emergency management system.

Lease/purchase slide: This is for chrome books, laptops, projectors, etc. New to the budget this year is the entry access controls.

Maintenance of building and grounds: Last night we had \$400,000 in additional state aid. Last night the board decided that instead of using it all, we would use \$250,000 and lower the tax levy with the rest. What we did is cut \$150,000 from the maintenance budget, down to \$350,000. We will see what we can fit in budget for next year. We are hoping to do a lot of painting, we will talk to principals. May do some asbestos abatement and refinish the Glen School gym floor. Also, we have \$1.3 million from the capital reserve that we will use in the budget for projects. We looked at the worst stuff and put the money in for that. BF and GW bathrooms; replace the stadium turf field at the high school because it's coming to the end of it's life. Dr. Fishbein said that twice a year we do an impact test to see when it's unsafe to use the field and it's now time to do it. It's a widely used asset to the community.

Summary slide of things district has been doing over the years to save money and be more energy efficient: Did ESIP program to be more energy efficient. We have had solar panels throughout the district; contract with Energy for America to monitor all energy systems. We have been providing more programs in the district for special needs students. We started the Nova program in Somerville this past year for special needs; Ridgewood therapeutic services; Glen School programs.

Antoinette provided an example of providing programs in-house versus sending students out: The slide shows the costs savings and line item spending. Potential savings of over \$200,000 by

keeping kids in district. When providing special needs services we want to provide the least restrictive environment.

Tax impact to community slide: General tax levy is what we will be voting on in April. Debt service tax level is here too. You don't vote on that based on previous voting. Tax levy increase for next year is 1.84%, the board is giving back money, and that takes us below the 2% cap. Ultimately Ridgewood people will decide if the budget passes. Dr. Fishbein added that the vote is April 16 and if you are planning to be away, fill out an advance ballot. Antoinette discussed the slide for assessed value of town. This value has a direct effect on the school tax increase. When it goes up, that's good because it lowers tax rate increase. Showing example of average tax increase.

Recap slide: The budget provides necessary staff for next year, continues academic offerings that we have, continues extra curricular activities. For students, improving structures program, keeping a safe environment, staying within statutory guidelines of state.

Dr. Fishbein spoke about the comparative spending guide from the BoE. He highlighted some numbers for regional high schools and comparable numbers for Ridgewood. First column on left is a pure number, total budget divided by number of students. Second column is the comparative number (some districts might have busing or carry a lot of debt, this has been stripped out for the second column). You can see per pupil that Ridgewood spends well under our neighbors. The reason being is that looking at ratios (s/t, s/support staff, s/admin) our ratios are on the high side so we don't have a lot of staff compared to other districts. Ridgewood celebrates the arts, athletics, other activities.

Antoinette added that they have two more public budget presentations coming up at GW and BF middle schools. The public hearing for adoption of budget is on March 25. April 16 is the budget vote.

*Question:* What happens if the budget fails? Dr. Fishbein: Then it goes to village council for review and they will make a recommendation. *Question:* Talking about ratios, we are low. Can we get it higher? Dr. Fishbein: No, practically speaking. This isn't a recent occurrence. There are two ways it could go up. 1. Can ask voters to reduce class size and hire more teachers. 2. We carry \$2.85 million in cap waiver so that would have to be voted on by the community to go over that cap. *Question:* So would the board be the one to push going over cap waiver? Dr. Fishbein: They would but I don't see that happening. *Question:* Why not? DF: Last night the board voted to reduce below 2% and that was submitted to the county superintendent of schools. Then they return it in time of public hearing on 25th. Then it gets resubmitted.

*Question:* Where is gifted and talented program in the budget? Dr. Fishbein: It's infused in the classrooms, there is work students can do. We don't have a set program, it is all integrated.

*Question:* Going back to your comment, is waiving the cap the only way to get more money to reduce class size.? Dr. Fishbein: Yes, you have to use up cap.

## **Principal's Report**

Dr. Jean Schoenlank

### 21st Century Classrooms

Jean has been taking pictures every time she sees authentic use of flexible seating. It gives kids more freedom in the school environment. Now we have a variety of work spaces and most teachers have done it as a sign up initially so kids can try everything. Kids can learn more about how they best learn, what works best for them. Traditional desk/chair or stool, etc. There are lots of options. There is also a standing desk with a swinging bar for the foot. First grade and third grade classrooms with regular stools and tables. Depending on the lesson, kids can sit on dots on rug, it's very colorful. There are bean bag chairs, scoop chairs. We are trying to develop readers, sitting at a desk all stiff is not necessarily conducive to that.

*Question:* So teachers give feedback about tangible differences? We should do a survey. First grade started it first, and they love it. Jean commented that it's a good point, we should figure out how to solidify evidence of what works best. The first graders are guinea pigs because in Kindergarten they didn't have traditional set up either. There are ball chairs in third grade. Mrs. Peabody said she noticed a difference in first graders with this seating.

*Question:* Is there an issue with how they keep their stuff? Jean: Buckets have been great to keep all of their stuff. Hooks on walls for book bags. Fifth grade have high tables and stools. They didn't have desks all year. Changing classes made a problem for storage so now that's been resolved. They have baskets that they take with them between classrooms. All of these changes have been thanks to the Fun Run, it has really made a difference.

Jean took all meeting participants on a tour of the classrooms so that they can see what has been implemented in the 21st Century Classrooms initiative.

## **President's Report**

Hilary Wallace

### Ridge Social Recap

The money made from the social will be a gift towards 21st Century Classrooms initiative and Hilary presented a check to Jean for \$7,000. Jean thanked the HSA and Hilary, noting that it's been an amazing project.

Hilary thanked everyone for coming, for donating, for buying. Spread the word it was a good night!

### Ridge Science Fair Recap

Science Fair was great, we won't get into too many details now in the interest of time. Thank you to everyone! We have already formed the committee for next year and have met to discuss how we want to change things. The parent demonstrations were awesome and the kids really enjoyed them.

### Tag FAIR

Hilary is trying to figure out when to do the Tag FAIR. 27th or 28th? On the 27th she has softball and there are other sports events that day. For families we will have bouncy houses, food, artisans, etc. In years past the tag sale was a good fundraiser, we could have it on Sunday April 28th instead. Or do we keep it on the 27th as originally planned and assume that it's two different markets; tag sale and baseball/softball/lacrosse? If we have it on the 27th Hilary might be worried about people being able to work it, not just people coming. What about setup? If we do Sunday, do we start it after church? The following weekend Mary will be away. When would people drop off large things then? Potentially on Saturday? If we do it on Sunday, it's not really viable to start late. People who go to tag sales go early. So we decided it will be Sunday, April 28th.

### Important Dates

#### *March*

- 3/15 Student Leadership Bagel Breakfast
- 3/15 Lip Sync 7:00 p.m.
- 3/19 K-2nd Author Visit Susan Hood
- 3/22 Second and Third Grade Concerts 9:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.
- 3/22 Teacher Appreciation Lunch
- 3/26 Jonathan Sprout

#### *April*

- 4/5 Fourth and Fifth Grade Concerts 9:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.
- 4/11 Heritage Day
- 4/15-4/19 School Closed April Recess
- 4/28 Tag FAIR Spring Fundraiser

### **Vice President's Report**

Barbara Dowling

### Friends of Ridge Campaign

FOR is all the school enrichment stuff that Board of Education doesn't pay for. We are currently at \$7,580 for donations. *Question:* The proceeds from the tag sale will go to where? Hilary: They will go to FOR. We will give to FOR and then anything remaining to 21st Century Classrooms. *Question:* Does anyone want a carnival? NO! said Shulamit. Maybe Hilary will get an ice cream truck. We weren't sure if we would do a bake sale or ask people to donate sandwiches or pizza

for the Tag FAIR. Maybe don't do bake sale, just do food and water, maybe ice cream? Instead of having people to baked goods.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Amy Kahn

#### **1. A motion was made, seconded and approved by those present to approve the Balance Sheet as of March 12, 2019 and the 2018/2019 Year-to-date Profit & Loss Statement.**

- Motion was approved by Hilary Wallace and seconded by Amanda Twilliger.

Quick general update to say everything looks good, in interest of time additional specifics were not offered at this time.

### **Planning and Development's Report**

Kerri Pilchik

#### Update

Next year's school activity will be Arts Day (we need a chair for that). Hilary is doing Ridge Wear. Maybe Caroline will chair Arts Day? We joked that she can go out with a bang. We have a major changing of the guard for next year in terms of committee chairs. We will have a new social committee, Bridget is doing teacher appreciation lunch, Heather is doing LEAP. There is a chance we are going online only for the directory, which will make Heather's life a lot easier. Caroline said that Glen Rock did an online directory, and it was a bit of a nightmare. She suggested that doing something online in addition to a hard copy would be good, but not to replace paper. They were talking about a pilot program that had success with online directory. It will not be hooked up to Skyward and it would be easier in that it would download from online to hard copy. There is an app that someone uses, Directory Spot. All HSA presidents have gotten into arguments that they don't have access to their directories when they wanted them.

### **Volunteer Coordinator's Report**

Amanda Twilliger

#### Update

No updates at this time.

### **Secretary's Report**

Shulamit Gershenson

#### **1. Motion - A motion was made, seconded and approved by those present to approve the Minutes from the January 15, 2019 Ridge H.S.A. meeting.**

- Motion was approved by Hilary Wallace and seconded by Tasneem Patrawala.

## Other

### Heritage Day Update

Garima Singh and Roopa Saggur are here to provide an update on Heritage Day planning. They have seven volunteers right now for presenting the countries and have finalized one performance, working on another one. They are reaching out to friends who can volunteer but need more people from school to take part in Heritage Day. How do we push them to sign up? Hilary suggested how to frame it to parents: We want to teach kids about different countries. There are lots of ideas, it's just fifteen minutes. You can talk about food, clothing, can do a craft, there is no fixed formula. People can work with Garima and Roopa for ideas. *Question*: Do you ever invite grandparents to come? Garima: Anyone can come and present. Love that idea. *Question*: Someone mentioned that when they go to Sign Up Genius they cannot see who else has signed up and what country.

There was food at the last one but this year there will be no food. It creates more issues than it is worth and can be challenging for kids that have food allergies. An example of how to use food in a way that's OK: Mr. Chen came with a whole dim sum cart and travelled around the school to show the kids but nobody ate it.

### Tic Toc

Caroline brought the Tic Toc party invite. \$20 for Tic Toc event at the Unitarian Church. They will be unveiling a new art activism collection that will be coming through the schools. Ai Weiwei will be included.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Shulamit Gershenson

Ridge H.S.A. Secretary

**NEXT HSA MEETING is Tuesday, May 14, 2019 at 1:15 pm in the Teacher's Lounge.**