

RIDGE H.S.A. INC.
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
JANUARY 14, 2020 at 1:30 pm
TEACHERS' LOUNGE

BOARD MEMBERS: *Albano, Ardito, Beiersdorf, Bender, Bosch, Briganti, Bruce-Lockhart, Bruno, Carr, Chudy, Daffron, DeVincenzo, Dowling, Flynn, Freeley, Gershenson, Gross, Harris, Holder, Hong, Kahn, Katzman, Killeen, Kong, Kupiec, Langheim, Lindenberg, Long, Losquadro, Maltin, McCarthy, Minetti, Monte, Muselli, Nadeau, Neuman, Patrawala, Pilchik, Seyfried-Clark, Singh, Sorabella, Steketee, Stephens, Strohmenger, Sullivan, Tobaccowala, Twilliger, Wall, Wallace, Williams, Wright*

PRESENT: *Dowling, Flynn, Kong, Minetti, Monte, Patrawala*

ABSENT BUT VOTING: *Albano, Beiersdorf, Bender, Briganti, Bruno, Carr, Chudy, Daffron, Freeley, Gershenson, Harris, Holder, Hong, Katzman, Kupiec, Lindenberg, Long, Maltin, McCarthy, Muselli, Nadeau, Strohmenger, Twilliger, Wall, Wallace, Williams*

MOTIONS:

1. *A motion was made, seconded, and approved by those present to approve the Minutes from the November 12, 2019 Ridge H.S.A. meeting.*
2. *A motion was made, seconded, and approved by those present to approve the Balance Sheet as of January 14, 2020 and the 2019/2020 Year-To-Date Profit & Loss Statement.*

Welcome & Call to Order

Barbara Dowling

Barbara Dowling, H.S.A. President, called the meeting to order at 1:36 pm.

Principal's Report

Dr. Jean Schoenlank

Book Character Day

Dr. Schoenlank said Book Character Day will be on Friday, January 17, when everyone will dress as a character from a book. (Families were alerted in October to allow time to find costumes.) A presenter at a workshop last summer described this as one way to build excitement about reading. Students will have a book talk and give-away—anyone who wants to do a book “talk back” will be given two books. There will be a parade through the school (internal, not for parents). Ms. Eng has developed some fun activities including a character scavenger hunt for K-2 and an online game for grades 3-5. We will end the day with a ROC assembly. Teachers and staff will do a read aloud Readers’ Theater of *Potato Pants*, a funny picture book.

One School, One Book

Dr. Schoenlank announced that this year’s book will be *Lowji Discovers America* by Candace Fleming, who will be visiting in March. The kickoff will be at the end of January. Each family will receive a book along with a bookmark listing the suggested pace of reading, and they will ideally read together. There will be activities at school. On our website, there will be recordings of teachers and staff reading chapters of the book as well. It’s a great story about a boy and his parents moving from India to Illinois over the summer. The boy has preconceived notions about

America but finds it's difficult to meet people. Ms. Eng has called a meeting of parents who have expertise about India so they will incorporate a cultural aspect as well.

Elementary Guidance Counseling Program—Ms. Lindsay Rubin

Dr. Schoenlank invited Guidance Counselor Lindsay Rubin to introduce the new elementary guidance program in Ridgewood. She and two other counselors will be presenting at the Board of Education on Monday, February 5 and today she is giving a preview of that presentation.

Ms. Rubin provided some background information about herself. She started her career in Fairlawn, where she taught first grade for seven years. She was then an elementary counselor in Chatham for 8 years. Developing a new program in Ridgewood offered a unique opportunity.

Why Elementary Counselors?

Ms. Rubin explained that more parents have been reporting students in Grades 6-7 with strong social-emotional concerns. Elementary teachers and administrators were working together but there was not a strong program in place to help them. Then suddenly in middle school, they were trying to address these concerns. She noted that the earlier they help students, the more successful they will be.

District Information

- The guidance program makes counseling available for all students. There are now three elementary counselors between six schools. Ms. Rubin divides her time between Ridge and Orchard, spending a bit more time at Ridge because it has more students.
- Intervention & Referral Services (I&RS) is an interdisciplinary team of professionals within the school environment who come together throughout the school year to formulate coordinated services and interventions to address student learning, behavior, social, and emotional issues in the general education program.
- Section 504 is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities. Section 504 ensures that students with medical or other disabilities have equal access to an education.

Social-Emotional Learning

This includes self-management, self-awareness, responsible decision-making, relationship skills, and social awareness. Ms. Rubin explained that through the counseling program, students will receive instruction early on in social-emotional learning. The goal is to have this become a normal part of what is done at school and for people to become comfortable discussing mental health. Dr. Schoenlank noted the Stigma-Free signs around town and said they let people know that it's okay to talk about having difficulties or things that are upsetting you.

Ms. Rubin explained that students and parents are comfortable requesting help with academics but hesitate to ask for social-emotional help. She wants people to know that it is okay to ask for help. Through the program, all students in K-5 will receive some level of social-emotional instruction. Teachers provide this in the classroom and she will guide them with this. She noted that some students need more help beyond what is offered in the classroom.

Working With Students

What would this help look like? It is open-ended. She will help anyone who is struggling; the help depends upon the need. She focuses on concerns that are school based rather than issues at home. She focuses on helping students be successful while they are at school. She works with students on coping with anxiety, peer conflicts, new student transitions, grief and loss, emotional regulation, phobias, school avoidance, coping skills, social skills, and more.

Collaborating With Teachers

Ms. Rubin has teaching experience and empathizes with teachers; they are in the classroom all day and want to help students. Some students need more support and she can offer guidance on what they can do. A counselor meets with teachers, makes suggestions, and provides an extra set of eyes and ears to observe. She also helps teachers work with parents so that everyone is working together in the best interest of the student.

Partnering With Parents

Elementary counselors provide a level of support for parents. Parents may ask her for guidance and suggestions when they are unsure about what to do. Sometimes she may talk with a parent and may not meet with the child. She observes students and lets parents know what is going on at school. Parents are not at school and there may be more to the school dynamic than they are hearing about. Having a counselor provides an additional layer of support; there is another person at school they can contact. She would like parents to know that she is here for them and that contacting her can be the first step if they have any concerns. She can assist them in navigating general education supports as well as providing referrals for community resources.

Referrals for School Counseling

Referrals can come from anywhere. Teachers may let her know about their concerns and observations. Parents may reach out to her. Students may even refer themselves, which she welcomes; sometimes they go to their teachers first. Ms. Rubin has a mailbox with referral notes with a checklist that students can fill in. Dr. Schoenlank asked how many notes she receives each week from students. Ms. Rubin responded that it varies (sometimes one, sometimes more) but that it has been well received. Students sometimes approach her in the hall and ask to meet with her.

At the elementary level, she works closely with parents and obtains parental consent if she will be working regularly with a student. She also coordinates with teachers to schedule around specials and academics. She meets with students as needed (it might be weekly or less frequently). If the student is working with someone outside of school, she may collaborate with that person.

Ms. Rubin is a safe person for students to confide in, but she always stresses that at this age “confidentiality” is a loose term—parents are part of the partnership and she needs to communicate with them and work closely with them. She lets students know this.

School counseling is solution focused and always working toward a goal. It is not intended as long-term therapy throughout elementary school. They aim for students to develop the skills needed to proceed independently—to take the skills they’ve learned back to the classroom and be successful. The need is identified; scaffolding services are put in place; then they are pulled back when the student is ready. She may work with a student for 6-8 weeks, then step back and reevaluate.

Ms. Rubin looks forward to working with us and welcomed any questions. Dr. Schoenlank said she is so grateful to have a guidance counselor and that she has never had anyone to lean on in this way. She noted that the presentation emphasized how much of a team they aim to be with teachers, parents, and herself. It is a rewarding, challenging job to work in an elementary school. Concerns can bubble up during this time and it’s better to intervene now—“little kids, little problems.” If they detect any concerns—academic or social-emotional—it’s best to address them now and help students do their best as they head into middle school.

Tasneem said the middle school had a presentation on anxiety and asked if Ms. Rubin felt that anxiety is increasing at the elementary level. Ms. Rubin responded yes; anxiety is the number one issue that comes her way. People are comfortable with the term *anxiety*; kids use it to describe how they are feeling. She helps them understand the difference between *worried* and *anxious*. They might feel worried about a test, but true anxiety presents differently.

She has also noticed a broader issue: that from a young age, children are having strong feelings of all kinds and often lack the skills to handle these feelings. Intervening at a young age is helpful. Dr. Schoenlank observed that children are now living in a different world and are much more a part of the adult world, which filters down to them. When the proposal was made to hire guidance counselors, they looked at the surrounding districts and we were one of the few that did not have them. Ms. Rubin noted that elementary counseling offers a more proactive approach. Instead of intervening later in the form of discipline, they can address issues at a younger age before it gets to that point. Dr. Schoenlank thanked Ms. Rubin for presenting.

President’s Report

Barbara Dowling

L.E.A.P.

Barbara said that L.E.A.P. kicked off on January 7 with high enrollment and will run through January 30. Kids are enjoying it and it’s been a great success so far. Dr. Schoenlank said that 300 out of 460 students enrolled, which is great. Barbara said it’s a good break and offers something different at lunchtime. Tasneem said kids might be in a group with kids they might not otherwise interact with.

Wizards

Barbara said the Wizards games will be January 23 and 24 and they will face the Ridgewood A+ team, comprised of staff, teachers, and administrators (including Ms. Tobin, Ms. Eng, and Dr. Schoenlank). January 24 is sold out; there is limited availability for January 23. You can still use the link that was sent last week to buy tickets.

Gala/Auction

Barbara said the Gala will be held on Feb 1 from 7 to 11 pm at The Terrace in Paramus and will raise funds for classroom libraries and recess equipment. The planning process has kicked into high gear and everything is almost done. There will be a tricky tray raffle, 50/50 raffle, live auction, and silent auction. There are 75 silent auction items with bidding on the Handbid app (an online platform on your phone). Ticket holders can access the silent auction and start bidding on January 27.

Ridge parent and award-winning filmmaker Dana Glazer has made a short film about the fundraising initiative that explains the importance of reading and recess to our school and students. The film will be shown at the Gala.

We've sold about 200 tickets so far. There are seven items in our live auction, which are not on Handbid. Mark Bruno will be the auctioneer. There are 22 tricky tray raffle items, which are also not on Handbid. It will be fun night out for parents with a cocktail hour, buffet dinner, open bar, and dancing. Barbara asked everyone to spread the word about the Gala.

Ashley asked if any teachers had purchased tickets (available to them at cost). Tasneem and Lana said not yet. Barbara said they would have liked to offer free tickets to teachers but could only offer them at cost. They tried to keep expenses very low and sold sponsorship ads to cover costs. There was little money from the social committee budget to put toward the Gala.

Important Dates

February

2/1—Winter Wonderland Gala & Auction
2/4—Kindergarten Registration (3:30-4:30)
& Executive Board Meeting (1:00 pm)
2/6—Kindergarten Registration (3:30-4:30)
2/8—Drama Performance (3-5 pm)
2/11—H.S.A. Public Meeting (1:30 pm)
2/17-2/19—School Closed
2/21—Movie Night (7:00 pm)
2/28—Circus Performance (6:30-8)

March

3/3—Executive Board Meeting (1:00 pm)
3/5—Evening Science Fair (7-8:30 pm)
3/6—Science Fair
3/10—H.S.A. Public Meeting (1:30 pm)
3/20—Lip Sync (7-9 pm)
& Teacher Appreciation Lunch
3/26—Grades 2/3 Concert (9:15 am)
3/27—School Closed (Professional
Development Day)

Referendum—Dr. Daniel Fishbein & Ms. Antoinette Kelly

Why Does Ridgewood Need a Bond Referendum?

- A 2015 facility assessment report identified critical issues facing Ridgewood Public Schools that cannot be financed through the annual operating budget. This report was revisited by LAN Associates as a second opinion and to verify costs.
- District buildings range in age from 53-100 years old. Many systems are beyond their useful life, causing an increase in maintenance cost.
- Deferring these critical infrastructure and facility deficiencies could result in larger and more expensive complications.

Estimated Cost & Potential State Aid

- In NJ, eligible projects that are part of a referendum may qualify for state debt service aid that covers up to 40% of the cost.
- The state of NJ provides less than approved maximum state aid, somewhere around 34%.
- Actual cost will be based on the lowest responsible bid received.

Ms. Kelly distributed a packet outlining proposed renovation projects for each of the school buildings in Ridgewood. *[Added Note: Copies available in the Ridge office. A longer version is available online on the District website under Superintendent, Referendum. The document is under Presentations—12.16.2019: “Maintaining Existing Buildings Through Capital Improvements” by LAN Associates. Link to Referendum webpage below:]*

https://www.ridgewood.k12.nj.us/our_district/office_of_the_superintendent/referendum

Ms. Kelly said Dr. Fishbein is going to recommend these projects to the Board of Education. He has been meeting with architects since 2015 and did an assessment of the district. They hired LAN Associates to do a more thorough investigation and have worked with them for many years. Together with Dr. Fishbein and others, they identified a group of projects and divided them into high-priority and secondary projects for each school. The focus is on the 10 school buildings, not the Education Center.

Ridge Elementary

Ms. Kelly said the high-priority project at Ridge is heating and ventilation upgrades. Ridge has its original forced hot air system, which is a very uncommon system. (Glen School and Ridge are probably the only two schools in the state with this. This was a new system in the 1950s-60s but never got off the ground. It's inefficient and parts are not available, so they are looking to upgrade to a hot water system.) The new heating system will require panels along the bottom of walls. Full-pane windows will need to be replaced with smaller windows to allow for these panels. Some windows are old and have leaks and would be replaced with more efficient glass.

Other Projects Under Consideration at Ridge:

- Classroom casework upgrades: The casework is original to the school. Some of it is warping and delaminating; some drawers do not open.
- Classroom and corridor ceiling upgrades.

Dr. Fishbein said Orchard, Hawes, and Travell were built around the same time (same windows and same hot water systems). Other schools have steam, which is an older technology, and have the original pipes, which become brittle and eventually fail. One failed at Ben Franklin and damaged supplies in storage. They needed to drain the system and repair the pipe.

Ms. Kelly said most of the schools do not have temperature controls. They would like to put in digital controls so they can maintain different parts of the building depending on the use. You could schedule to have the heat come on in only one part of the building. The current system is either on or off; you cannot control it by section. With the upgrade, you could control it and

troubleshoot remotely from a laptop; you might not even need to come in to assess a problem. You could assess it remotely and send the right person with the necessary materials to repair it.

Ashley asked: Would the new system allow teachers to control the temperature in their classrooms? Ms. Kelly said the controls would be done from a laptop. The thermostat only controls the temperature by a few degrees. Dr. Fishbein said that people vary greatly about feeling hot or cold so they would rather have the custodian adjust the temperature if needed.

Dr. Fishbein and Ms. Kelly outlined the proposed projects at each school.

Hawes Elementary

- High Priority: Mechanical system upgrades, window upgrades
- Other: Ceiling and casework upgrades
- Through an energy savings program in 2016-17, they changed out lighting to LED. With the savings they were able to replace one boiler. There is another old boiler to replace.

Orchard Elementary

- High Priority: Mechanical system upgrades, window upgrades
- Other: Ceiling and casework upgrades

Somerville Elementary

- High priority: Mechanical system upgrades (original steam heating system; replace with hot water system)
- Other: Ceilings, bathrooms, and casework upgrades

Travell Elementary

- High priority: Mechanical system upgrades (original hot water heating system; one boiler replaced in 2018)
- Other: Ceiling and casework upgrades

Willard Elementary

- High priority: Mechanical system upgrades (original steam heating system; one boiler replaced in 2018)
- Other: Ceiling and casework upgrades

Ben Franklin Middle School

- Needs more work than other schools
- High priority: Mechanical system upgrades (original steam heating system; one boiler replaced in 2018); bathrooms upgrades; auditorium and media center renovations. BF has the only library that has not been renovated in any way.)
- Other: Stair tower door replacement; ceiling upgrades

George Washington Middle School

- High priority: Mechanical system upgrades (original steam piping system; one boiler upgrade in 2018); Stair tower door replacement (replace wood doors)
- Other: Ceiling upgrades

Glen School

- High priority: Mechanical system upgrades (original forced hot air system); window upgrades
- Other: Ceiling and classroom casework upgrades

Dr. Fishbein explained that these are estimates. Once the board approves them, the architect will do schematic drawings. Then they send these to the state of NJ and the state approves the costs. If the costs come in less, it's 34% of the lower cost. The state does not guarantee a certain amount of money. The bond goes out for the whole number. There was additional discussion about details (previous referendum, taxes, reimbursement, state aid). Bridget Kong asked: What would happen if the bond did not pass? Dr. Fishbein said they would come up with what they would approve and try again.

Ridgewood High School—High-Priority Projects

- HVAC equipment upgrades (original forced hot water systems; boilers replaced in 2018)
- Courtyard drainage improvements (When it rains, the courtyard floods, drains into the field, and could possibly flood the school. They would put in several retention basins.)
- Fire-alarm system upgrades (RHS has been added to several times so the system is a mish-mash; system does not indicate exactly which classroom is affected; new system would let the fire department know exactly where the fire is.)
- Other projects: Ceiling upgrades

Ridgewood High School—Proposed Performing Arts Center

- One-third of students are in music, chorus, band, or orchestra.
- There is not enough space; students are crammed in practice spaces.
- RHS is the only high school in Bergen county without an auditorium.
- The Little Theater has only 220 seats. (Once the new auditorium is built, this would be used for lectures and classes.)
- Sometimes students use local churches or the campus center for performances; the campus center does not have good acoustics.
- The proposed addition includes additional classroom space and studio space to practice/perform, a 1000-seat auditorium, a parking structure, a stage-building workshop, and a living/learning green roof.
- Architect renditions are not final; there would be a nice entrance but not necessarily like the drawings.
- RHS has 1800 students; they cannot build an auditorium to fit the whole school. But they could fit two grades at a time in the new space. Currently they need to hold an assembly four times for the whole school to see it, either in the gym or campus center.
- RHS has had an open campus for more than 40 years; students may use their free time to practice instruments, singing, and dance. Extra space is needed for this.
- When the campus center is being used for performances, they need to build a stage while students are studying and eating lunch there. Not having an auditorium in a large high school makes things very complicated.

Ashley asked: What is the parking structure? Dr. Fishbein said the addition would take over some of the parking. The architect came up with the concept of the parking structure. They can't add a lot of parking because there is no excess property.

Dr. Fishbein also noted that they want to make sure the addition would fit appropriately so that it doesn't take away from the high school, which is a beautiful building. Also, when they complete projects, they don't look to do them cheaply. They put in the proper equipment and maintain them well, which is why they have lasted.

Tasneem asked: What is the timeframe once they have approval? Dr. Fishbein said it would take several years. They wouldn't shut down all the heating systems at once so they might do three a year over a three-year period. The work would start as soon as possible. A lot of work would need to be done before they put in the boilers (such as installing piping in the evenings). They would need heating in place by October 15. Work would be done over the summer. For some of the work, staff would need to be relocated during the process.

Ms. Kelly explained that the board would vote in February. The referendum vote would be in September. That would leave enough time for the architect to do the drawings, prepare to go out to bid, then start work over the summer. Dr. Fishbein said they would wait for funding approval, then start detailed drawings. The process can take 6-8 months. The Village Building Department can approve the plans, but they are still sent to the Department of Education to let them know that the Village has the credentials to approve. However, the building department has other work and school projects do not take priority.

Ashley asked: Would the work at all ten schools be done at once? Dr. Fishbein said it would take 3-4 years to complete the work depending on how long it would take to get approval. Bridget asked: Were they putting out the total number for the referendum? Dr. Fishbein said there could be two separate questions—mechanical projects and high school auditorium. Dr. Schoenlank thanked Dr. Fishbein and Ms. Kelly. Dr. Fishbein said everything is on their website. He welcomed calls with any questions.

Vice President's Report

Ashley Minetti

Ashley said Friends of Ridge had raised \$5440 as of last week. Tasneem has a record of \$5950. There were no enrichment activities in January. Meet the Musician, a schoolwide event, will be on February 21. Circus week will begin on February 24. The Kindergarten classes will have yoga in March. Author Candace Fleming will visit Grades 3-5 on March 11.

Treasurer's Report

Tasneem Patrawala

A motion was made, seconded, and approved by those present to approve the Balance Sheet as of January 14, 2020 and the 2019/2020 Year-to-date Profit & Loss Statement.

- *Motion was made by Bridget Kong and seconded by Danielle Flynn.*

Tasneem said we've been using QuickBooks online and each year the subscription fee goes up; this year it was \$430. Through Tech Soup you can apply as a nonprofit for lower-priced contracts for subscriptions and hardware. Over the past two months, she has set up a new QuickBooks online account through Tech Soup; the yearly fee is \$75. All data was exported onto the new account and we will receive a prorated refund for the account we had previously set

up for this year. All transactions, memos, etc. are there as read only so you can compare accounts. Barbara thanked Tasneem for taking the initiative to change the accounting system and noted that it was a lot of work to transfer all the data. Tasneem said she found out about the lower costs on Tech Soup from Rebecca Rubenstein.

Statement of Financial Position

- Bill Ward Fund is at \$25,587
- Savings \$35,349
- Operating Account \$60,808
- TD Account for Legalized Games of Chance \$1949

Year-to-Date Actuals vs. Budget: Revenues

- We received \$6000 in donations for the Bill Ward Fund.
- The Book Fair did well and netted as much as we budgeted, approximately \$3200.
- Membership/Directory fell short of revenue and is at \$6128. Last year we sold 262 directories. This year we sold fewer even though we reduced the price.
- Ridgewear revenues are \$3000, double what was budgeted.
- Wrapping paper revenues are \$2415, also double what was budgeted.
- For the 2020 Fundraiser, we have sold 201 tickets and received some donations.

Year-to-Date Actuals vs. Budget: Expenses

- Flowers and gifts at \$1522
- Teacher appreciation lunches at \$587

Planning & Development's Report

Kerry DeVincenzo

Kerry was unable to attend the meeting and will give an update in February.

Volunteer Coordinator's Report

Mark Bruno

Mark was unable to attend the meeting and will give an update in February.

Secretary's Report

Danielle Flynn

A motion was made, seconded, and approved by those present to approve the Minutes from the November 12, 2019 Ridge H.S.A. meeting.

- *Motion was made by Tasneem Patrawala and seconded by Ashley Minetti.*

The H.S.A. received thank-you notes from Dr. Schoenlank for the holiday gift; Ms. Quinlan for the birthday flowers; and Ms. Quinlan for the holiday gift.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Danielle Flynn
Ridge H.S.A. Secretary

NEXT H.S.A. MEETING is Tuesday, February 11, 2020 at 1:30 pm in the Teachers' Lounge.