



GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING MINUTES • November 29, 2018

A. In Attendance

It was noted that (a) parents and other “persons in a parental relation” as defined by the regulations of the New York City Chancellor and designated persons having a relationship to a child or children currently attending Q300 (the “**Parents**”) and (b) eligible Q300 teachers and instructional staff members who are currently employed on a full-time basis (the “**Staff**”) at Q300 were present. The total number of Parents and Staff (together, the “**Members**”) present was 22.

B. Call to Order

Co-Presidents Julissa McHugh and Paula Marisi called the the General Membership of the Q300 PTA Association to order at 6:40 pm in the auditorium at the lower division campus at 28-37 29th Street, Astoria, NY 11102.

C. Approval of the Minutes

The minutes of the General Meeting held on September 26, 2018 were presented. A motion was made to approve such minutes the Secretaries were authorized to fill in the number of attendees to be filled in later. The motion was seconded. A majority of Members approved the minutes.

D. Co-Presidents’ Report

Co-Presidents Julissa McHugh and Paula Marisi gave the President’s report. The following are the highlights:

1. Over 450 Q300 community members attended the Halloween Costume party on October 28, 2018.
 2. Over 80 parents, family members, and friends attended the “Night at the Gallery” on November 16, 2018. Thanks to parent Ingrid Kennedy for hosting the event at the gallery.
 3. Q300 is organizing a Hackathon at the upper division next week and the organizers are looking for more volunteers.
 4. The PTA is organizing a teacher appreciation luncheon, which is scheduled on November 21, 2018. Special thanks to Rami Motiyr for donating food for the luncheon and for those volunteers who helped with set up.
 5. The PTA is coordinating a with PS 17’s PTA a free showing of the movie, “Trolls” on December 7, 2018.
 6. Thanks to parent volunteers who organized the Thanksgiving Pie Sale.
 7. Parent Sue Sekar is collecting funds for holiday teacher gifts.
 8. Thanks to all those who helped out in the upper division open house.
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E. Co-Treasurers’ Report

Co-Treasurer Karen Van Wart delivered the Co-Treasurer’s Report. Attached is a copy of summary of the PTA’s finances for October 2018. In October 2018, The PTA raised \$65,116.59, which includes \$55,525 from the Direct Appeal. Expenses were \$518.22, which includes \$391 in Direct Appeal credit card fees.

F. School Leadership Team (“SLT”) Report

Co-PTA President Paula Marisi gave the SLT report. The following are highlights:

1. At the November 26, 2018, the SLT discussed refining certain goals in the Comprehensive Education Plan (“CEP”), including needs assessment.
 2. SLT parent members expressed concern that Q300 has increased class size in 1st - 4th grades to 31-32 students per class, in order to make up for budget shortfalls due to a decrease in the number of students in the upper division. (Several rising seventh graders have left Q300 for a number of reasons, including leaving to attend Hunter High School and Baccalaureate School for Global Education). (School funding is determined, in part, on student enrollment). Principal Bill Biniaris agreed to explore ways to recruit upper division students and would solicit parent feedback.
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G. Principal’s Report

Principal Biniaris gave the Principal’s Report. The following are highlights:

1. While there is no set limit to the number of field trips, he would like to have each grade take five field trips during the school year. In response to a question, Bill noted that field trips should align with the curriculum. Recently, there have been several field trips. For example, 7th grade visited the Storm King Art Center; the 8th grade visited the NYC Spy Museum. In December, the 3rd graders will visit the Hayden Planetarium; the 5th graders will visit the Queens County Farm; and the 7th graders will visit the American Museum of Natural History. Principal Biniaris hopes that one day, both lower and upper division students will go on field trips together. He also noted that it is sometimes difficult to find chaperones for upper division field trips; parents from any grade may serve as a chaperone for upper division trips.
2. Kindergarten and first graders are having writing celebrations. Second graders are having a gingerbread celebration.
3. Upper division after school programs include debate, math, and robotic clubs, and the Global Kids program (which is fee-based for fifth graders and free for sixth through eighth graders).
4. Q300 has hired a lower division social worker, who will likely start in January 2019.
5. Asphalt Green is a Q300-funded lower division program that coordinates recess activities and increases the number of adults present during recess. Principal Biniaris will look into a claim that students may be required to participate in these activities and are told that if they do not participate, they will have to sit out rather than actively play on their own.
6. Assistant Principal Anna Milonkis will be returning from maternity leave and will be at the school on a part-time basis. Third grade teacher Carol Choi will be starting maternity leave soon; teacher Zoraida Dooley will temporarily replace Ms. Choi during the leave. Lower division technology teacher Ali Lisberger will be taking maternity leave as well. A leave replacement teacher has not been selected.
7. The Department of Education (“DOE”) has extended the deadline for middle school and high school applications to December 14, 2018. In order to guarantee admission to Q300 upper division, fifth graders must select Q300 as their first choice in their middle school applications.
8. NYC Rise will hold a parent workshop at 5:30 pm on December 3, 2018 to discuss its program in which kindergarteners and first graders will receive \$100 for college scholarship.
9. Q300 will hold its Special Education Council meeting on December 4, 2018, a parent workshop on the education of English language learners from 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm on December 12, 2018 at the lower division campus, and a parent workshop on multi-tiered positive behavior interventions at 9:00 am on December 11, 2018 at the upper division campus and at a time to be determined on December 20, 2018 at the upper division campus.

10. Q300 will hold its upper division dance on December 13, 2018 at 3:10 pm.
11. Coffee with Principal Biniaris will be held on December 21, 2018 at 9:00 am at the Upper Division.
12. Lower division parents can reserve time to speak with teachers during parent engagement block on Tuesday afternoons from 2:30 pm to 3:10 pm, Upper division parents can do the same from 3:10 pm to 3:50 pm.
13. A parent suggested that Q300 provides teachers with a specific approach in scheduling time during parent-teacher conferences. Currently, each teacher has his or her own approach – some send out online meeting requests via various online platforms to parents; others require parents to submit paper requests. Principal Biniaris has received parent concerns about the online scheduling platform, as parents who do not access the online platform immediately often get shut out from any time slots. The paper method allows parents to choose multiple time slots and teachers schedule parents based on availability.
14. For the 2019-2020 school year, Q300 is planning to have three sixth grade classes (Class of 2022) to accommodate the rising Q300 sixth graders and the rising sixth graders from the citywide gifted and talented class at Public School 85. (Those P.S. 85 students get automatic acceptance to Q300, provided that they select Q300 as their first choice in their middle school applications). Q300 anticipates that the Class of 2022 will decrease to two classes by seventh grade, due to student attrition. Further, Q300 cannot accommodate three classes for each 7th and 8th grades due to space constraints in the upper division campus.
15. The CHAMPS Middle School Sports and Fitness Program, which is taking place from 7:10 am to 8:10 am at the upper division campus, will end on December 15, 2018.
16. A parent expressed concern that parents are required to use their child's 9-digit student ID number (OSIS) to log into a third-party photo gallery to select and purchase their child's school photos. The parent noted that sharing the OSIS number with the photo agency may be in violation of the Chancellor's regulations concerning keeping personal information confidential. Principal Biniaris agreed to look into this issue.

H. Committee Reports

1. **Fundraising.** Co-Vice President of Fundraising Claire Lui noted that the Halloween Costume Party and Thanksgiving pie sales raised more funds than had been projected. Direct Appeals chair David Wang reported that the Direct Appeal has thus far raised \$134,000. Thanks to all those who have donated. At this time last year, the Direct Appeal had raised \$90,000.
2. **Community Affairs.** Co-President Julissa McHugh gave the report. The following are highlights:
 - a. The PTA is collecting used coats, new socks, new pajamas and books through December 14, 2018. Students can bring donations to the Guidance Counselor's Office at the Upper Division or the Teacher Workroom at the Lower Division.
 - b. The PTA is working with Q300 to organize service-learning projects for each grade. Please contact Co-Vice Presidents of Community Affairs at communityaffairs@q300pta.org, if you have any leads for non-profit organizations that Q300 can partner with to coordinate these projects or if you know of anyone who can give a presentation about the service work that they do.
 - c. Q300 is organizing a basketball tournament at the Upper Division. Please contact community affairs if you can volunteer as a coach or referee.

I. Resolutions

1. A motion was made to approve a resolution to appoint the following members to serve on the 2018-2019 audit committee: Appointment of 2018/19 Audit Committee members: Jasmine Rosner (chairperson); Ravi Kaushal; Lorna Thorpe; and Jennifer Zeynel. The motion was seconded. A majority of Members present approved the motion.

2. A motion was made to approve a resolution to increase the Costume Party Budget by \$700 for the Costume Party budget. That amount would increase the budget from \$800 to \$1,500. (Please note that the Party yielded \$2,500 more in revenue than the amount (USD \$3,000) that was originally budgeted, which offsets the proposed increase.) The motion was seconded. A majority of Members present approved the motion.
3. A motion was made to increase the Thanksgiving pie budget from \$1,400 to \$1,800, in order to reflect that the PTA sold more pies than had been projected. (The increase in budget permits the PTA to expend the amount to purchase the additional pies. The PTA would keep any profits from such sales). The motion was seconded. A majority of Members present approved the motion.
4. A motion was made to increase the gift card budget receipts by \$16,000 (from \$30,000 to \$46,000) and increase expenses by \$15,000 (from \$28,000 to \$43,000). (The increase in anticipated receipts permit the PTA to expend the amount to purchase additional gift cards. The PTA would keep any profits from such sales). The motion was seconded. A majority of Members present approved the motion.
5. A motion was made to approve a resolution to allocate \$3,500 to pay for additional payments for teaching assistant (TA) salaries during the Fall 2018. (Such payments totaled \$4,800, which is partially offset from prior year rollover balances and delays in TA start dates.). The following are highlights from the discussion.
 - a. At the beginning of the school year, the PTA issued a check to the Department of Education (“DOE”) to pay for the TA salaries from September to December 2018. Each TA’s hourly rate is based on merit increases and seniority.
 - b. In November, the PTA learned that the Administration had used an incorrect formula to calculate the hourly rate for the TA salaries in the DOE payment system. The result was that the TAs were paid at a rate higher than the ones that the PTA had budgeted. As a result, since the beginning of the year, the PTA overpaid the TAs a total of \$4,800 (the “**Overage**”). However, because due to prior year rollover balances and delays in TA start dates, the PTA has USD \$1,300 to cover some of the Overage. The resolution allocates \$3,500 to cover the remaining amount.
 - c. Based on discussions between Q300 and the TAs, Q300 has proposed that the TAs’ hourly rates (the “**Revised Rates**”) remain the same from now through the end of the year. To help pay for the additional cost, the Administration will pay USD \$941 and the TAs will work a half-hour less each day by taking a longer lunch break.
 - d. Given the increase in the state minimum wage on January 1, 2019, the TA’s new hourly wage will largely be similar to the Revised Rates. The PTA has already budgeted for such increase.
 - e. In the future, Principal Biniaris will oversee the input of TA salaries in the DOE payment system to ensure that such error does not happen again.
 - f. A motion was made to approve the resolution. The motion was seconded. A majority of Members present approved the motion.

J. New Business

1. Principal Biniaris explained that the pupilpath website (Skedula) provides online grading information on class assignments. In contrast, the NYC School Account ([https://www.schools.nyc.gov/school-life/support/nyc-schools-account-\(nycsa\)](https://www.schools.nyc.gov/school-life/support/nyc-schools-account-(nycsa))) has report cards and is the platform for middle school and high school applications. Principal Biniaris noted that he cannot require teachers to use the pupilpath website. A lower division parent noted that her child’s teacher uses the pupilpath website noted and she would like to see teacher comments about her child’s progress. He noted that parents should be getting hardcopy assessments from their teachers and that the pupilpath website should have a link to such assessments. Some parents noted that several teachers are not providing that assessment. A lower division parent requested that they get feedback on subjects like technology and Spanish language.
2. While parents appreciated the Administration’s efforts in communications, several requested that the administration streamline communications. One parent noted that the Administration uses emails, texts, and other modes to convey the same message.

3. A parent requested that parents should stay within the time allotted for their meeting with teachers during parent-teacher conferences.
4. A parent requested that the Administration reach out to the Office of Pupil Transportation to ask them to provide notice about changes in the bus schedule.
5. A parent expressed concern that behavior issues are not being adequately addressed in fifth grade. Principal Biniaris stated that the narrative of what is happening in fifth grade needs to be reshaped. He noted that he is seeing a lot of progress. He noted that the school is using the multi-tiered positive behavior intervention program in the fifth grade. It is identifying the students who are struggling and progressively addressing the students' issues. He stated that "we are addressing issues" and that "the kids are growing."
6. One parent noted that neither 5th grade class is an integrated co-teaching ("ICT") class. (An ICT class is where a certain percent of the class consists of students with special needs who receive specially designed instruction to meet such students' individual needs. Each ICT class has two teachers.) The parent asked whether there will be an ICT class next year for the sixth grade. Principal Biniaris explained that current the sixth, seventh and eighth grades have one class that is an ICT class. He noted that next year, he expected that next year's sixth grade class will have one ICT class, since the DOE's enrollment division will reserve a certain number of seats for students with special needs to ensure one ICT class.

K. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:14 PM. The next general meeting will be held on December 20, 2018 at 6:30 pm in the lower division campus.

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M. Daniel Bach and David William Wang, Co-Secretaries