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## A. In Attendance

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It was noted that (a) parents and other “persons in a parental relation” as defined by NYC Chancellor regulations as designated persons having a relationship to a child or children currently attending Q300 (Parents) and (b) eligible Q300 teachers and instructional staff members who are currently employed on a full-time basis (Staff) at Q300. Quorum was reached.

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## B. Call to Order

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The virtual meeting was called to order at approximately 6:35 p.m. ET.

As has been done for the past ten years at the first PTA meeting of the academic year, the Q300 Mission Statement was read in Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, Russian, Korean and Bengali.

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## C. Principal’s Report

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Principal Sonita Ramkishun reported that a total of 74 new students have joined Q300 in grades K, 1, 2, 3 and 6. Last week, enrichments and electives began. The vendor Togetherhood is doing the majority of enrichments this year. Robotics and Cooking are not available as fall enrichments; however, they may be available in the Spring. Some of the Fall enrichments include Film Festival, Shakespeare Festival, Music, and Chess. Thanks to David Wang for his help posting Teacher Assistant (TA) positions. Three TAs are currently in the onboarding process. One will be joining Q300 next week; Principal Sonita will be making three offers tomorrow. Eighth Grade families, please look out for emails from Khary Chang, the Upper Division guidance counselor. Mr. Khary will be sharing information about high school enrollment. Happy New Year to our families who will be celebrating Rosh Hashanah; enjoy your time with family, friends and loved ones.

Parent Coordinator Jenny Lando spoke on behalf of Lower Division Social Worker Rachel Weiss. Ms. Rachel is looking for parent speakers who may be willing to present to students at the Upper and/or Lower Division about their careers or habits of mind. Examples of habits of mind include street smarts, gathering data through your senses, listening with understanding and empathy, and ways to find humor. If you are interested in making a presentation that focuses on some of these ideas, please reach out to Ms. Rachel at [rachel@q300.org](mailto:rachel@q300.org). In addition, if you are interested in speaking about your cultural heritage, please let Ms. Rachel know. Past examples of such presentations include growing up in a family restaurant, and bringing certain types of foods to New York. Ms. Rachel is looking for ways to bring home into the classroom and the classroom back home. Virtual or in-person presentations are possible.

Ms. Ali is no longer the UFT representative. Ms. Michelle is currently the UFT representative.

Lower Division chess enrichment is currently being scheduled.

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## D. Treasurer’s Report

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Co-Treasurer Sophia Peng reported on the 2024-2025 budget approved in June 2024, and delivered the Treasurer’s Report. Last year, the PTA raised \$227,000 through the Direct Appeal. Additional Direct Appeal monies were received after the June 30 accounting year. Last year, fundraising brought in \$92,000. This year, the target is

\$69,000, up from the \$65,000 target approved in June. The following amendments are proposed: fundraising with New York Martial Arts Academy and fundraising events at the Barclays Center.

For cash outflows, the PTA is prepared to fund two Teaching Assistants (TAs) per grade for Kindergarten, First and Second Grade, and one TA per grade for Third and Fourth Grade, for a total of eight TAs. However, because the full complement of TAs has not yet been hired by Principal Sonita, the projected budget for TAs has been adjusted downward. Last academic year, the PTA had budgeted for a total of nine TAs, but the school was unable to hire and retain the full complement. TA hiring and retention has been an issue since the pandemic. To address the retention issue, TAs are being offered two paid sick days and paid federal holidays that fall during the academic years. There is one TA from the 2023-2024 academic year who is interested in returning, and who has been offered \$22/hour instead of the usual \$20/hour paid to TAs. Since the pandemic, the PTA has had healthy budgets for TA hiring, but has had difficulty filling the positions.

Principal Sonita assigns hired TAs to classrooms/grades based on needs. In response to a question as to whether TA pay should be raised, Co-President Mauricio López-Campero responded that other schools offer TA pay ranging from less than \$20/hour to \$35/hour. Increasing TA pay to \$30/hour would present budget issues for the PTA. In addition, there is some concern about offering TAs a payrate that is higher than the hourly rate of DOE-employed paraprofessionals. According to Principal Sonita, TAs have expressed that being unable to take days off is an issue for them. Principal Sonita believes that offering the two paid sick days/paid federal holidays will make the position more attractive than offering a higher hourly rate.

TA positions are posted on Indeed.com and are sent out to parents who work in education and have connections to prospective candidates. This year, approximately 112 candidates have applied. Principal Sonita, not the PTA, hires for the TA position; the PTA only funds the positions. Historically, TAs have not been hired for the Upper Division. Principal Sonita does not believe a TA is needed for the Upper Division this academic year.

The PTA budget contains wish list funds for teachers to purchase items for their classrooms. Not all teachers use the wish list funds, even though the opportunity to use those funds is advertised throughout the year. However, teachers are appreciative that the PTA makes those funds available. The current amount made available to each teacher through the wish list funds is \$550.

The PTA has increased its financial aid fund for families. This fund can be used in a variety of ways. For example, during the Summer, when families were ordering school supplies, they were able to contact Ms. Rachel if they wanted financial support. Ms. Rachel then coordinated with the PTA Board, which provided funding to the parents. Ms. Rachel does not share the names of parents/students who are requesting financial assistance with the PTA Board.

The budget contains an Eighth Grade graduation fund of \$1,800. It also contains \$800 in funding, per grade, for curriculum-based fieldtrips for each grade in the Upper Division. While the PTA funds part of the Eighth Grade graduation, the Eighth Graders also do their own graduation fundraising. This is important because responsibility is one of Q300's core values.

A motion was made to pass the amended 2024-2025 PTA budget, as presented by Sophia. The motion was seconded. The members then present approved the motion.

In July and August 2024, there were collections from the Direct Appeal, as well as collections from the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Carnival from merchandise sales. The PTA made a \$35,000 deposit for TAs. There were some payments made for matching that the PTA helped Ms. Anna and Ms. Jessica fund. There were also fundraising expenses. The bank balance at the beginning of the school year was \$377,000; it is now \$343,000. If you would like more details from the Treasurer's Report or would like to request the full budget, please contact [treasurer@q300pta.org](mailto:treasurer@q300pta.org).

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## **E. Election Committee**

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Kevin Gallagher agreed to chair the Q300 PTA Election Committee for the 2024-2025 academic year. Tomonori Nagano and Heather Clarke also expressed interest in serving on the Committee.

A motion was made to appoint Kevin, Tomonori and Heather to the Election Committee for the 2024-2025 academic year. The motion was seconded. The members then present approved the motion.

Elections for vacant PTA positions as well as the vacant SLT parent position will take place at the October 24 PTA Meeting. Members, including those new to the school, are encouraged to run for a position on the Board or for the SLT position. Vacant Board positions include Vice-President(s) of Community Affairs, and Co-Vice-President for the Upper and Lower Divisions.

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## F. Committee Reports

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1. Vice-President of Fundraising Lucy Han provided an update on the Flower Power fundraiser, which is underway, and the Tea Collection fundraiser, which is about to start. The PTA has partnered with the Barclays Center to offer discounted tickets to events held there, including Disney on Ice. Field trips and teacher appreciation events through the Barclays Center are also possible. Q300 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary merchandise is still available for purchase. Please email [fundraising@q300pta.org](mailto:fundraising@q300pta.org) if you are interested in ordering any items. David Wang and Sue Sekar continue to oversee the Direct Appeal, which is the main way funds are raised for Q300. Direct Appeal monies fund enrichments, TAs, and other projects that benefit Q300 students. The suggested donation amount is \$1,500 per Lower Division student and \$1,000 per Upper Division student. Many corporate employers offer matching; please check with your employer to see if they do so. Families should give an amount that makes sense for their budget; all donations are meaningful, irrespective of the amount. Direct Appeal solicitation materials will be sent out shortly. Thank you to the Q300 community for its generosity over the years supporting the Direct Appeal.
2. Vice-President of Lower Division Erica Soto Eng shared a list of the class parents. The list will be published in the PTA bulletin, on the PTA website, and in the class WhatsApp chats. Thank you to the parents and guardians who volunteered to be class parents. A call will go out soon for volunteers for the Teacher Appreciation Committee. The Committee will organize a holiday teacher/staff appreciation event, as well as one in May.
3. Vice-President of Membership Afrosa Amin reported on school supplies. In recent years, the school was able to cover the cost of school supplies using pandemic funds. For the 2024-2025 academic year, those funds were no longer available, so parents were responsible for purchasing school supplies. The Q300 administration selected the items on the supply list. The PTA then identified a supplier who could provide the supplies to parents who choose to place an order through the supplier. For every purchased order, the PTA received \$5. Thank you to the volunteers who came to the Lower Division to unpack the boxes of school supplies, separate the individual supplies from the communal supplies, and carry the supplies to the classrooms. The PTA raised almost \$1,300 through the school supplies. The Back to School picnic took place on September 8 in Astoria Park. The event was very successful. Thank you to everyone who volunteered and attended. The Costume Party will be taking place on October 26 from 2:00-4:00 p.m. at the Upper Division. If you are interested in working on the planning committee for the party, please contact [afrosaa@q300pta.org](mailto:afrosaa@q300pta.org). Finally, Membership will be working with the class parents to make sure they have contact information for all the parents in each grade.
4. Vice-President of Upper Division Nick Skolnick is looking for another class parent for the Seventh Grade. Please contact [udrep@q300pta.org](mailto:udrep@q300pta.org) if you are interested.

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## G. President's Report

Co-President Mauricio López Campero reported on the Presidents' Council, a group of PTA presidents within Community Education Council (CEC) District 30 who meet to coordinate different initiatives. The next initiative is the District 30 "Trunk or Treat," which is scheduled to take place on Friday, October 25 from 5:00-7:00 p.m. at the Astoria Park Parking Lot. Mauricio and Co-President Dana Holmes have reached out to the PTA presidents of Q300's co-located schools, PS 17 and IS 126, to set up a meet-and-greet and bolster relationships between the schools. Q300 has a "One School" committee that is working to identify or build a new school so that the Upper and Lower Divisions can be combined in one location. Last week, Mauricio presented to Queens Community Board 1 about the "One School" proposal. Mauricio reported that the building where PS 17 and the Lower

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Division are housed is more than 25% over capacity. In addition, the Class Size Reduction Act requires that there be more classrooms and/or additional teacher hires. Moving Q300 to a different building would help address the overcrowding at PS 17 and the Class Size Reduction Act requirements. CEC District 30 President (and Q300 liaison) Whitney Toussaint and City Council Member Tiffany Cabán have been helping with the One School efforts. If you know of any site close to public transportation that is big enough to house the Lower and Upper Divisions, please contact [president@q300pta.org](mailto:president@q300pta.org) so the site can be investigated to see if it meets requirements.

Q300 is subject to the Class Size Reduction Act. However, it unclear how the school will be affected. Parent Coordinator Jenny Lando clarified that as of now, there are no plans to remove currently-enrolled Q300 students. However, for every school that has incoming students (for example, for Kindergarten and between Kindergarten and First Grade, when class sizes increase from 25 to 32), it is possible that incoming class sizes will be reduced and that class sizes in other grades will be reduced through attrition. For screened schools like Q300, there is additional time to meet the reduction requirements.

At present, Q300 is the most in-demand public school in Queens for Kindergarten, and the waitlist for a Kindergarten spot is in the 300-400s. Two sixth graders were added this week. The waitlists are now closed for the academic year.

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## **H. Approval of the Minutes**

A motion was made to approve the June 20, 2024 general membership minutes. The motion was seconded. The members then present approved the motion. One PTA General Meeting minutes are approved, they are posted on the PTA website.

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## **I. School Leadership Team (SLT) Report**

The SLT is a body of parents, teachers and administrators who work to create Q300's Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP), which specifies the goals and the strategies of the school for the academic year. The SLT also provides guidance for critical decisions of the school. At the last SLT meeting, the SLT set meeting dates for the academic year and discussed the "Meet the Teacher" event which was held on September 12 starting at 3:00 p.m. The administration is exploring a hybrid in-person/virtual model for next year that will allow parents who are unable to come to the school to meet the teachers virtually. The SLT also discussed the Math and English Language Arts (ELA) results from the 2024 state tests, which were excellent.

In response to a question as to whether the SLT had discussed an option for non-SLT member parents to attend the meetings remotely, Mauricio responded that the issue was discussed last year and Principal Sonita's preference was to not permit remote attendance. Mauricio will raise this issue again at the next SLT meeting.

SLT meetings are currently held in-person at the Lower Division at 4:30 p.m.

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## **J. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:40 p.m. ET. The next meeting will take place on October 24, 2024, in a virtual format.

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Kate Swearngen & David William Wang, Co-Secretaries