

**Northern Highlands Regional High School Home and School Association, Inc.,
(HASA) Minutes of the General Meeting Held on Wednesday December 8, 2021**

In Attendance:

Lisa Kulick, Naomi Ono, Thao Groenewald, Lisa Halperin, Jennifer Moodie, Tammy James, Sonia Agarwal, Lisa Mundy, Angelica Degenars, Christi Yu, Sarah Franchi, Shadee Barkan, Jennifer Fishman, Renee Lardieri, Susan Esserman, **Kathy**, Grace Perruzzi, Bob Males, Kathy Travers, Rachel Milston, Lisa Comninellis, Jess Carlin, Myndee Males, Grace Paolillo, Kristen Tsarnas, Diana Norian, Annaliesa Anderson, Jean Weng, Deborah Hayden, Lorraine Reichert, Alpa Patel, Kelli Moss, Amy Hesse, **Kristin**, Yunha Bang, Jane Bodnar, Bob Males, MaryAnne Arber, Christine Ferrarie, Inna Moor, Maja Roewe

School Administration in Attendance:

Scot Beckerman, Joe Occhino, Robin Knutelsky, Tony LaRocca, Jose Madhavasseril, Kelly Peterfriend

HASA President - Lisa Kulick:

Lisa welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 9:00am.

Superintendent's Report - Dr. Beckerman:

We have scheduled a Referendum presentation for the Jan 12, 2022 HASA meeting, so please help us spread the word and invite everyone to join us at that meeting to learn more about the referendum.

I am also updating our referendum webpage as new information filters in. The webpage can be accessed via a link at the upper right hand section on the homepage of the school website or at: <http://www.northernhighlands.org/referendum>

We will continue to update all information and finalize the numbers before the March 8, 2022 vote.

We are expecting our NJQSAC (Quality Single Accountability Continuum) state monitoring walk-through on Friday January 7, 2022.

We anticipate state representatives to monitor the buildings the week of December 13, 2021.

(NJQSAC is a process for monitoring school districts to determine the extent of efficiency in all aspects of education).

We continue to struggle with many of the ancillary items, like transportation, esp the Upper Saddle River route. We have gone out to bid three times with no takers on those routes, so our

custodial staff who are certified to drive will continue to drive our building buses, potentially through the remainder of the academic year. Additionally, although we continue to advertise for cafeteria positions, but we have not even had candidates to interview, so we also anticipate being short-staffed in the cafeteria for the remainder of the academic year.

Our budget process is continuing and will be finalized by the April meeting.

Participant question: There's been chatter about behavior issues on the buses, particularly in USR? Specifically, there's been talk of a phone being thrown out of the bus on Route 17. Should those who have been talking about these incidents reach out to report the events and to whom should they reach out?

Answer (Scot Beckerman & Tony LaRocca) This is the first we've heard of this incidence. Doctor LaRocca is the liaison with the transportation company and notes that although the school receives incidence reports from the bus company if the bus driver makes a report, he has not received any report of something being thrown out the window. He will follow up with the bus company to investigate this incidence. Going forward, please do reach out to Doctor LaRocca to report any type of issues on the buses so the administration can quickly investigate and resolve.

Mr. Occhino adds that anytime the school receives reports of behavioral issues on bus routes, he and Doctor LaRocca do go on the buses to personally address those issues. The report which he has verified and addressed is a report of a student's backpack being thrown out the window at a bus stop, not on Route 17; this may be the same incidence embellished or a separate incidence, and the administration will investigate further.

Principal's Report - Joe Occhino:

We have had a great school year, based on the COVID reports which continue to go home, we've been very fortunate as the beginning of the school year has seen zero cases among students and staff.

But we have started to see an uptick in those numbers. The most recent report indicates that as of Friday December 3, there are 3 staff members and 3 students who have tested positive for COVID-19.

Please continue to be diligent, if your student(s) is/are feeling ill, has/have symptoms, please keep your child(ren) at home. There has been a lot of talk recently about the significant number of students who are absent from NH, and I want to remind everyone that the absences are not all COVID-related; prior to COVID, this time of the year is flu season, and many students are currently home with a flu diagnosis. So although the absences are not COVID-driven, we still need to do our part to keep our ill students home to mitigate the spread of any virus, not necessarily just COVID. As we move forward, please continue to take temperature every morning, please do your best to help us keep our buildings open, especially during this holiday season as we anticipate more gatherings in an indoor environment.

In years past, the Holiday Hoopla with a 90-minute lunch has always been scheduled for the day before our December 23 minimum day. Students typically attend class, go to the 90-minute lunch, then return to class. We will also continue the tradition of having a faculty-student volleyball game on that day. However, we are changing logistics a bit to manage the risk of students gathering, then returning to the classroom. We have decided to move the Holiday Hoopla and 90-minute lunch from its historical day preceding the minimum day to the actual minimum day on December 23rd. Classes on the minimum day will be 25 minutes long, the students will then enjoy their 90-minute lunch, then leave school directly from the lunch period for the holiday recess. I will send this information via email in the near future.

On a positive note, our school community has been just fantastic. Our fall season was wonderful, our football team had a tremendous season, and I send kudos to Mike Koth and everyone who helped plan the football game that took place at NH against Ramapo High School. Almost 4,000 people were in attendance, and it was phenomenal to see how our school community came together. When we went on to play in the Stage Final, it was just heart-warming to see the sea of red on our side of the Rutgers Stadium. From the perspective of an administrator, our focus is all about our students and our school community, and the event was such a huge uplift at a time when we really need an uplift, so thank you to all who were there, thank you to everyone for their involvement and their support, and certainly, to Mike Koth and his coordination of all these events.

Parent question submitted via Zoom chat: My question is about accessing the zoom links when students are out sick. My daughter has been out for 2 days and was told that she cannot use the zoom link. This really puts pressure on her to return to school before she is back to 100%. Can you talk with us about supporting our kids when they are not in school for illness?

Scot Beckerman answers: Phil Murphy's executive order only allows schools to provide a remote option if absences are COVID-related, so for any other absences, whether illness or weather-related, education is traditionally-delivered. There was no remote option to deliver education before COVID, and once COVID is under control, we assume that remote delivery of learning will no longer be an option.

The following link to the Department of Health provides COVID statistics for the state and is updated each week. We monitor this closely because the rules we must follow change depending on the level of heightened alert in our region, as reported by the Department of Health. You'll notice that after the Thanksgiving break, half of the state was designated as "High" in terms of transmission rate. This is the second to highest level, and demands a separate set of rules to govern our contact tracing and quarantining decisions: <https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/statistics/covid/>

Joe Occhino adds: When we have a staff member or student who is identified as COVID positive, we proceed with contact tracing:

1. We eliminate all those who are fully vaccinated because the vaccinated portion of the school community does not have to quarantine or isolate (we are still gathering

vaccination data via the survey available on Genesis, so please do log on and complete the survey to help make our contact tracing more efficient),

2. We ask the teachers whether the students were masked in class or within 3 feet of one another for longer than 15 minutes – those who have been fully masked and not within 3 feet of one another for longer than 15 minutes do not have to quarantine or isolate,
3. We notify all parents of all exposed students and let them know whether or not their student(s) need to quarantine and the factors contributing to those decisions.

Parent question submitted via Zoom chat: Do you check who they are eating lunch with when they are unmasked and sitting much closer than 3 feet?

Joe Occhino answers: The school nurse speaks to the students about cafeteria exposure for contact tracing. We all know the cafeteria is a different environment because the students are unmasked to eat. Again, vaccination status determines who will require quarantine procedures.

Parent question: Apparently, there was a rumored school announcement on December 7th that 17% of students were out sick yesterday. Is there a %age of absences that would require school closure?

Joe Occhino: We have 1,400 students here and are nowhere close to that percentage of absences that would require school closure. Not all the absences are COVID-related, we do know that students were out for the flu, and if the NJ Health Department determines that its necessary to close the school to sanitize the facilities, they will let us know.

Assistant Principal of Student Affairs - Dr. Tony LaRocca:

Nothing to report, I wish everyone Happy Holidays, stay safe and healthy!

Director of Guidance - Kelly Peterfriend:

A new counselor will be starting on Friday December 10th to assume the case load of Mr. Stone, who will be leaving after 22 years with the district.

Both the new counselor and Mr. Stone will work together on the transition on Friday this week.

The juniors have been working with their counselors in small groups; we have two evenings planned for the junior class to keep the program small and intimate.

We plan to start one-to-one meetings with the Juniors and their parents after the Holiday Break, so communication will start soon to junior families to organize scheduling of those appointments.

In preparation for the class scheduling process, which will begin after the January semester break, Counselors met with Department Supervisors last week to review all existing courses and learn about new courses.

We are fine-tuning the Curriculum Guide in preparation for Board approval on Monday December 13th.

The Elective Explorations Program which we've made available for the past five years will continue in video format. We will distribute those videos and post them on our school website after the new year so students and their families will have the opportunity to view them before their elective planning meetings.

As of this week, 92% of our senior class have applied to colleges. Please remind your seniors to continually update Naviance with their results. Please also remind your seniors with January 1, 2022 deadlines that they need to make an appointment with their counselors immediately to mitigate deadline issues due to the deadline falling on a school holiday when offices are closed. Finally, please remind your seniors to regularly check Naviance for scholarship opportunities; we are continually updating Naviance with relevant information on scholarship opportunities as they become available.

Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment - Mrs. Robin Knutelsky:

Our Summer Academy is currently scheduled to run for 5 weeks with an anticipated opening on June 27, 2022 and a closing date of July 28, 2022. Like last year, classes will be held Monday through Thursday during the 5 weeks of the program.

Courses offered will of course depend on student enrollment, but we anticipate offering Honors Biology, Honors Chemistry, Geometry and Financial Literacy. We also have a preliminary list of new classes which will be distributed in survey format to students in January 2022: CAD, Creative Writing, Ceramics¹, Public Speaking, World Language Refresher Courses in Spanish, Italian & French (2.5 weeks in duration). The surveys to students will also allow for suggestions of new courses which are not yet on the summer curriculum.

Parent question submitted via Zoom Chat: are there any more digital courses besides Financial Literacy?

Robin Knutelsky answers: The courses we offer in the Summer Academy are in-person courses. If a student needs to meet the graduation requirement for Financial Literacy, that is done outside of NHRHS. Like last summer, all our Summer Academy courses will be in-person.

As the semester winds down, I'd like to reiterate several key points from a letter recently distributed via email from Mr. Occhino:

1. If a student is struggling, please reach out to the teacher for extra help opportunities
2. Students can also take advantage of NH tutoring. More information is available via the "Highlands Tutoring" link found on the school website, in the red panel on the right side of the home page. The link will show a calendar of drop-in tutoring sessions available in the core content areas: English, Math, Science, World Languages and Social Studies.

¹ Availability of this course will depend on the ability to adequately distance students throughout the facility

3. Finally, students can reach out to their counselors and request a student tutor through the National Honor Society Tutoring Program.

Quantum Computing Course is a new course to NH for the next academic year. Quantum Computing is the intersection between Math, Computer Science, Electrical Engineering and Physics. Some of our students have been taking a Quantum Computing course as a self-paced course with support through IBM Corp. We are entering into a partnership with IBM Corp to offer the course at NH. Students will learn the basics of Python Programming Language as part of the curriculum. The course will be facilitated by a staff member who will physically be in the classroom with the students, but the course will be a blended format which is predominantly self-paced and remote.

Preliminary results of our annual Holiday Raffle

Lisa Kulick expresses appreciation to Joe Occhino and Jose Madhavasseril for their magic drawing of the raffle tickets and technical support of our annual fundraising effort.

HASA sold a record number of raffle tickets this year - over 2,400 raffle tickets and 195 junior parking raffle tickets.

We are thrilled to announce that we made \$21,740.00 and are looking forward to meeting with Joe Occhino in the new year to determine where we can best put these funds to use to support our students and our school district.

Thank you to our Highlands community, our sponsors, our local businesses, and our Highlands families for your steadfast support and for joining us on December 2nd for the drawing. We look forward to again holding this event in person in the future so we can once again mingle and enjoy one another's company during the fundraiser.

Vice President - Tammy James:

Thank you to all the volunteers who came together as a village to help us put on this annual event. And again, thank you to the school administration for their support of our fundraiser.

Membership - Naomi Ono on behalf of Audrey Flynn:

We currently have 288 households who are HASA members.

Our membership is always open, it is one of our primary fundraisers, and annual dues not only help HASA support the school and students, but also give members access to our password-protected, app-based online student directory.

The cost of HASA's annual membership is \$35 and payment can be made by check or PayPal.

Please join us by visiting our website at <http://www.northernhighlands.org/joinhasa>.

If you have any questions please contact Audrey at (917) 715-9305 or hasamembership@northernhighlands.org

HASA Treasurer - Naomi Ono:

As of December 8, 2021, our checking account balance is \$40,930.00, and our Money Market account balance is \$58,097.00.

Thank you to all the Holiday Raffle donors and sponsors for your generosity and participation.

To the volunteers, I enjoyed seeing your creativity and talent and appreciate the positive energy you brought to the effort; I enjoyed every minute of the project. If you have expenses related to the fundraiser, please forward your receipts so I can send your reimbursements.

HASA Recording Secretary – Thao Groenewald:

If you have logged on without a name or a shortened name, I would appreciate your help with the meeting minutes process. Please either send me your name in the chat box or change your name in the Zoom preferences menu so I can have a complete listing of the meeting attendees.

The minutes of the November meeting have been posted on our website. I'd like to ask for primary and secondary motions to approve the November minutes.

Kathy Travers motioned for approval and Jane Bodner seconded the motion.

Newsletter – Lisa Kulick on behalf of Shantala Kaikini:

Submissions for the February 2, 2022 Newsletter are due by January 19, 2022.

Past Newsletters are always available to read at <https://www.northernhighlands.org/Page/6748>

Board of Education – Lisa Halperin:

Our next meeting will be held on December 13, 2021, when we will say goodbye to two board members: Amy Langevin and Jim Mulanaphy.

NH Sports Association - Kathy Travers for the Sports Update:

Our football team is the North I Group 4 State Champion. Although they lost last Saturday to Irvington, they had a fantastic run and are being praised in the media.

School spirit and community enthusiasm during the football team's run were contagious and overwhelming. Congratulations to everyone involved.

Many other Fall athletes have been recognized with post-season honors, and we will spend the next few weeks highlighting all the fall sports teams, their seasons, and their achievements.

Winter sports will be governed by all current and future COVID protocols and restrictions. All spectators of indoor sporting events must be fully masked. At this time, athletes do not require masks and there are no limitations on the number of spectators allowed. Our sporting events will be livestreamed this winter season.

MPAA - Grace Perruzzi:

The marching band wrapped up its season under the new director Ms. LaMotta and celebrated the end of their season with a dinner at Biagio's.

The Marching band also performed at both the championship football games during halftime.

The Holiday Concert is at 7pm tonight on December 8th. There will be a bake sale fundraiser at the concert.

Our membership of only 35 families is down this year compared to the prior two years' levels at 80 families at the same point in the calendar year.

MPAA memberships start at only \$25 for the Booster level, and payment can be made by PayPal by following this link: www.northernhighlands.org/Page/5887

The task list for the Spring Musical was distributed last week.

The Musical is scheduled for the 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th of March 2022.

The acapella groups will have their first competition in January 2022

We continue to brainstorm for fundraising ideas to help with the high costs of replacing broken instruments.

MPAA meets on the 1st Tuesday of each month at 7:30pm on Zoom. Our next meeting will be on January 4, 2022.

HASA President - Lisa Kulick:

Lisa thanked everyone in attendance, wished everyone Happy Holidays and a happy & healthy New Year, then adjourned the meeting at 9:44am.

The next HASA meeting will be conducted on Zoom at 9:00am on Wednesday January 12, 2022.