

# **Northern Highlands Regional High School Home and School Association, Inc., (HASA) Minutes of the General Meeting Held on Wednesday February 9, 2022**

## **In Attendance:**

Lisa Kulick, Naomi Ono, Thao Groenewald, Jane Bodnar, Kathy Travers, Maggie Liljegren, Jill Frank DeLuise, Jess Carlin, Bob Males, Emily Kaufman, Rafael Ferrales, Inna Moor, Amy Hesse, Tamara James, Kathy Glynn, Evelyn Paglieri, Christi Yu, Patrice Duker, Yunha Bang, Barton Schack, Susan Esserman, Jennifer Moodie, Rachel Milston, Maja Roewe, Angelica Degenaaars, Audrey Flynn, Kelli Moss, Liz Batenhorst, Lisa Comninellis, Annaliesa Anderson, Julie Cornacchia, Sonia Agarwal, Grace Perruzzi, Kristen Tsarnas, Lisa Mundy, MaryAnne Arber, Chrtistine Giunta, Lynelle Tedesco, Christine Ferrarie, Dipti Chauhan, Laura Amos, Anna Maria Pochatko, Anjali Pai, Cyrus Pavri, Anne Kay, Lorraine Dario, Andrea Pennington

## **School Administration in Attendance:**

Mr. Joe Occhino, Dr. Tony LaRocca, Mr. Michael Koth, Mr. Jose Madhavasseril, Ms. Kelly Peterfriend, Ms. Robin Knutelsky

## **HASA President - Lisa Kulick:**

Lisa welcomed everyone, noted that Dr. Beckerman won't be joining our monthly meeting, and called the meeting to order at 9:02am.

## **Principal's Report - Joe Occhino:**

An email was sent to the Highlands community regarding the lifting of the mask mandate effective Monday, March 7, 2022. We will continue to monitor health protocols at the school, be in constant contact with the NJ Health Department, and continue our weekly COVID report every Friday. We receive our weekly COVID Activity Index Report every Thursday, and if the report shows an increase in transmission rate, then as a school, we do have the ability to reinstate the mask requirement, but we are hoping that given the significant downward trend since mid-January and our move as a state from red alert to orange, we are moving in the right direction. The lifting of the mask mandate makes masks optional, so anyone can certainly choose to continue wearing a mask beyond March 7, 2022.

The Junior Prom will be at 7pm the evening of March 12, 2022, which is on the same day as the SAT.

State testing has been suspended due to COVID over the past two years, but they will resume this year. A letter will be sent out with our state testing schedule in the next two weeks. There will be two state assessments: the NJSLA (NJ Student Learning Assessment) and a new assessment, the NJGPA (NJ Graduation Proficiency Assessment).

The **NJGPA**, to be administered on March 15, 16, and 17, 2022, is a comprehensive exam for ELA and Math for eleventh graders only and is a graduation requirement. The schedule is being developed to allow other students to arrive at school later in the day to accommodate the administration of these state assessments.

The **NJSLA** will be administered on April 26, 27 and 28, 2022. This is a test of Algebra 1, Algebra 2 and Geometry, ELA 9 for ninth-grade students, and Science for eleventh-grade students.

Parent question: How does the no mask change the quarantine?

Joe Occhino answers: We are waiting on additional guidelines from the Department of Health and the Department of Education on isolation and quarantine. At this moment, we are following guidelines on a five-day isolation period based on close contact with a COVID-positive individual. One factor which has been key in our identification of close contacts is the guideline that if a person is masked while in close contact with a COVID-positive individual, the masked person does not have to quarantine. Now, on March 7, 2022 when the masks are no longer required, then anyone who is unmasked and in close contact with a COVID-positive individual will require a different set of guidelines.

Parent question: Will vaccination status impact the quarantine guidelines after the mask mandate has been lifted?

Joe Occhino answers: We are waiting on additional guidelines, but I suspect that anyone who has received vaccines and boosters, will not be required to isolate.

Parent question: How do you accommodate any children who may be immunocompromised with the lack of masking?

Joe Occhino answers: Again, we will follow updated guidelines from the Department of Health. After March 7, our status will be mask optional, which means anyone who feels the need to continue wearing a mask for protection should do so, especially if they are immunocompromised. I will speak to our school nurse for clarification and expect to receive additional guidelines from the Department of Health.

Parent question: Can the musical cast lift the mask already the weekend before that (show is on Mar 3-6)? That would be so great.

Joe Occhino answers: We had already discussed this, we understand that it would be difficult for the students in the cast to sing with a mask on, we've discussed the ways in which the musical is being conducted, and whether the choreography may allow the students the physical distance to be unmasked, and we have already made our decision on this topic.

Parent question: Please clarify the number of days off, the students have for winter break. There are two calendars that contradict each other.

Joe Occhino answers: Students are off from school on February 21 and February 22. The first calendar did have Wednesday as a professional day for staff, but it was subsequently revised,

and the calendar that is posted on our school website has Wednesday as a full day of school for students.

Parent question: Is the NJGPA a new test and will it be given yearly?

Joe Occhino answers: Yes, it is a new test, and as of now, it is planned as an annual test. It is used to assess the level of proficiency of our eleventh grade students and will also be a graduation requirement.

Robin Knutelsky adds: The NJGPA will follow the same format as the PARCC and NJSLA tests. The test is entirely online. The graduation requirement is in state code, so it is highly probable that we will see this assessment again next year because it is in state code. The last time our eleventh graders took a state assessment was in eighth grade, and the current test will follow that online format.

### **Assistant Principal of Student Affairs - Dr. Tony LaRocca:**

Student attendance: while we were in the red and orange COVID alert levels, we made a deliberate decision to not release the automated student absence letters to families since the action is contradictory to our message to keep home students who are feeling sick. The technology team, the Genesis Coordinator and I have been analyzing all the attendance data we have in Genesis and will start to send individualized letters to Guardian 1, as listed in Genesis, which detail how many days a student has missed for specific courses. This will ensure that everyone has the most current attendance information as we resume sending absence letters to families.

### **Director of Guidance - Kelly Peterfriend:**

This week marks National School Counselors' Week, sponsored by the American School Counselors' Association, to recognize school counselors for all they do for our students and our school community.

Last week I held student assemblies to meet with Ho-Ho-Kus, Allendale and Upper Saddle River middle school students and have also held parent meetings with Allendale, Ho-Ho-Kus, Upper Saddle River and Saddle River families to guide on course selection and the transition to high school.

Parent question: Are students all done for choosing their courses next fall?

Kelly Peterfriend Answers: We just started this process on Monday this week and will continue through March.

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

Our Summer Academy registration opened at the beginning of this month, and we have 46 students who have already expressed interest in joining our Summer Academy. We are currently

reviewing files to ensure that all interested students have met their prerequisites, and we will send out acceptance letters in the next week.

Please be reminded that we continue to offer tutoring to all high school students in core subject areas (English, Math, Social Studies, World Languages, and Science). Students do not need to make appointments, tutoring is a drop-in offering, with some held in person and some held via Zoom.

We had over 100 students take our State Seal of Biliteracy test this year. 61 students passed the exam and will have an additional Seal on their diploma to demonstrate that they are biliterate.

We also have two senior students and three junior students earn two additional languages on top of the biliteracy seal and can showcase that they are literate in multiple languages.

### **Assistant Principal of Athletics - Michael Koth:**

Our Winter Athletic season started rocky due to COVID, we experienced cancellations of events on all levels for our Varsity, JV and Freshmen teams.

**Bowling:** Our boys' and girls' Bowling teams have won their league titles. Our girls' team also captured the North 1 Group 3 State Sectional Championship. Sarah Holden won the Bergen County Individual Championship and is the first girl in school history to do so. The boys' team is scheduled to compete in the State Sectional Championship this weekend in Hackensack.

**Fencing:** Our boys' team took first place at the Bergen County Championship. Jacob Lee took second place for foil, and Kevin Bae took third place. Christina Shih also won the Bergen County Championship for Saber in the girls' bracket. In Districts, the boys' foil took first place as a team and the girls' saber team took second place, with the boys' team placing second overall. The boys' team has advanced in the State tournament to face Morris Hills. Five of our fencers have advanced to the State Individual tournament.

**Swimming:** Division champs for both boys' and girls' teams. Jack Kraus and Grace Lee placed first at the Bergen County Meet in freestyle. Our relay team in freestyle, Sanja Radan, Grace Lee, Meghan Rourke, and Emma Paccione all won first place in their event. Teams advance in the state tournament.

**Basketball:** Girls' team qualified for Bergen County Tournament and looks forward to qualifying for the State Tournament. The boys' team had a win in the Bergen Invitational Tournament, downing Lodi and advancing to face Ridgefield Park, a team they already beat this year.

**Winter Track:** 4x200m relay won the Bergen County Championship, with Michael Braun, Dhylan MacLaren, Zach Madison and Brian Buono bringing home the gold medal. The teams continue to participate in indoor and outdoor meets this season.

**Archery:** The team is hoping to qualify for the Big North Conference Championships taking place later this month.

**Wrestling:** Amanda Connors became the first women's champion in school history, bringing home the gold in the 138-town Bergen County Women's Championship Tournaments. Brendan Connolly took third place at 144, Justin Gradzki took third place at heavy weight, our team was the best team in Group A. The boys' team advanced to the state tournament, and although as a team, they lost to Randolph by 6, quite a few athletes advanced to the State Tournament as individuals.

**Hockey:** Currently at 16-3-3, the team advanced to the Bergen County Finals against Don Bosco Prep to whom we lost. The team is looking forward to qualifying for the Big North Conference Cup Tournament and the State Tournament.

The Athletic Department held its second workshop with the Positive Coaching Alliance. Underclassmen were identified in each Fall, Winter and Spring seasons to engage in a leadership conference to build teamwork and mental leadership skills and to help improve the culture of individual programs and the culture of the entire Athletic program at Highlands. We currently have 25 student athletes who were nominated by coaches for this season.

We have 5 more student athletes who signed commitments to play collegiate sports on National Letter of Intent Signing Day. We hope to have another date later in the year. Hailey Pataki was honored with this year's National Girls & Women in Sports Award, which recognizes an athlete for her accomplishments both on and off the field.

Spring sports sign ups have started. Please make sure paperwork is in by the February 20 deadline. Medical physicals remain valid for one calendar year, so if you have submitted the medical paperwork, you won't need to do so again; however, the HHQ Form must be submitted every season, even if you have already submitted it for the prior season. Spring schedule will ramp up at the beginning of March.

Please be reminded that there is a Referendum vote on March 8, 2022 to improve school facilities. We encourage you to get to the polls and vote.

Parent question: Can you explain your comment on the annual medical physicals?

Michael Koth Answers: Medical physicals are valid for one calendar year, please submit the form to the school nurse who, along with our school doctor, reviews all profiles in order to medically clear students to participate in sports.

### **HASA President - Lisa Kulick**

HASA is sponsoring a conference call and meeting on Tuesday, February 15 at 7pm for a Referendum presentation by Dr. Beckerman. There will be an opportunity to ask questions.

We have 5 HASA members with graduating seniors, so we are actively looking for new committee members. Please reach out to [hasa@northernhighlands.org](mailto:hasa@northernhighlands.org) if you have an interest in taking on a more active role within HASA.

### **HASA Treasurer - Naomi Ono:**

As of February 9, 2021, our operating account balance is \$41,618.42, and our Money Market account balance is \$58,102.10.

By now we assume that all expenses associated with the holiday raffle have been addressed but if that is not the case, please let us know via email at [hasatreasurer@northernhighlands.org](mailto:hasatreasurer@northernhighlands.org) and submit your receipt(s) so that we can reimburse you immediately.

### **HASA Recording Secretary – Thao Groenewald:**

The minutes of the January 2022 meeting have been posted on our website. Kathy Travers motioned for approval and Susan Esserman seconded the motion.

### **HASA Membership - Audrey Flynn:**

We currently have 289 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>.

Please contact Audrey at (917) 715-9305 or [hasamembership@northernhighlands.org](mailto:hasamembership@northernhighlands.org) with any questions.

### **Newsletter – Lisa Kulick on behalf of Shantala Kaikini:**

Submissions for the March 2, 2022 Newsletter, are due by February 16, 2022.

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

### **Board of Education – Maggie Liljegen:**

Thank you to HASA for sponsoring the upcoming Referendum round table with Dr. Beckerman. We encourage Upper Saddle River and Allendale residents to attend and ask questions in preparation for the March 8 vote. Our next meeting will be held on Monday February 28, 2022.

### **NH Sports Association - Kathy Travers for the Sports Update:**

Unfortunately, due to COVID restrictions, Pasta Mania will not be held this year. We hope to bring this wonderful tradition back to NH next year.

Our next Fundraiser is our Annual Golf Outing, currently scheduled for May. We will post details on our website and social media platforms.

We are introducing new magnets as our newest fundraiser. We offer a large primary, 4"x 4" Northern Highlands magnet for \$5 and then a wide variety of smaller magnets for \$3 that can be positioned beneath the larger NH magnet to represent all the athletic programs: football, field hockey, softball, lacrosse, cross country, cheer, etc. These will be announced shortly, and we will include more details on our website and social media platforms.

### **MPAA - Grace Perruzzi:**

The A'Capella groups competed last month, Highlands Voices placed third and will be moving on to the semifinal round of the competition.

The Spring Musical ***Something Rotten*** is scheduled for March 3 through 6, 2022. Tickets are available online. Students can buy discounted tickets the week of February 28, at \$10 for the side sections and \$15 for the center orchestra section. We accept payments by cash or check.

Save the Dates:

Spring Band Concert	7pm on April 7
Spring Choral Concert	7pm on May 11

MPAA Scholarships are available to senior students, details have been distributed to senior families and available on our page of the school website.

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

### **HASA President - Lisa Kulick:**

Lisa thanked everyone in attendance, our next Zoom meeting is Wednesday, March 16, 2022. Meeting adjourned at 9:51am.