Thursday, October 9, 2025

HKIMS PTO Meeting Minutes

Attendance

In-Person:

Nicole Harlow, PTO President	Julie Peryga, PTO Vice President	Kristi LiDonni, PTO Treasurer
Kelly Drajewicz	Eric Larson, IS Principal	Heather Persson, MS Principal
Steve Fitzgerald, MS Asst. Principal	Robin Duffield, MS Teacher Liaison	Nick Tedeschi, IS Band & Chorus Teacher
Mariah Miesel		

Meeting Start: 6:03pm

Previous Business

- Motion to approve minutes made by Kristi, seconded by Nicole; no objections
- Review of September 5, 2025 minutes
- Treasurer Kristi LiDonni showed pictures of the garbage can with gift cards for custodians' day. 8 gifts were bought and will be distributed.

President's Report & Vice President's Report

- Cougar Color Challenge
    - Nicole noted she needs the Sponsor list to send out thank you emails to sponsors. With email/google down it has been a challenge.
    - Nicole noted the signs are in the ground and asked to keep eye on them, as cars park on side and may damage them.
    - Registration flyers were printed and sent home with IS and MS week of 10/6.
    - Already received a few fundraising accounts on Zeffy. One student already at $300. All proceeds go directly to Zeffy and are then transferred to PTO Account.
    - Prizes have been ordered. Kelly passed around one of the prizes, the HK Bracelet. Once students raise money, PTO tallies amount day prior raised by each student and grade and then gets the prizes ready to bring to school the following morning for teachers to give to those students. The prizes will be in a Ziploc bag with their name on it. It's important to get the bags to the teachers to hand out to students as soon as possible.
    - Julie noted the shirts are going to be ordered 10/9 as she has the final count. She will up the count by 10 (L) Adult shirts to have extra on hand for teacher/staff participating.
    - Julie and Nicole noted the color powder was purchased. They went with a new vendor, which was some savings to LY, due to prior vendor only having small packets and sold out of some items.
    - Sign up for volunteers need to go out as soon as the email/google issue is resolved. Mr. Larson noted IT is working on the issue, but he can send out mass/bulk emails. Nicole to get a zip drive with the sign up and volunteer announcement letters to Mr. Larson this coming week. The first email to go out will be longer to introduce the event. Please have staff promote in class. The next email will be a shorter email asking for volunteers to sign up and to schedule a date for introduction to all volunteers.
    - Kelly passed around a mockup of the setup and walking routes. She asked if teachers would be willing to do a warmup lap with the kids before the color powder starts. LY kids did

not really know how to walk the laps. Eric and Heather said they would ask teachers.

- This year there is a bubble route, it will be separate from the color track. Because of this Kelly noted PTO needs to know in advance what kids want to do color track and who wants to do bubble track. Kids will need to pick in advance and will not be able to change after they pick. Count needs to be in by 10/20 on who is doing color track or bubble track.
- Kelly also asked if there is a way to put up string or caution tape on the corner of the tracks. Robin mentioned she would ask HK Rec if we can borrow the soccer flags to put in the ground on those corners as markers.
- Kelly and Nicole discussed clean up and transitioning from MS to IS kids for the walk. Robin noted it was very chaotic getting MS students to busses as IS students were walking same route to get to the tracks. PTO and MS/IS Principals discussed moving back the times by 10 minutes for IS so they are out before the MS clean up and IS is waiting with teachers. Finally, it was decided to have similar times to LY and have MS head to buses via Gaga ball pit as IS heads to the fields. MS 150-240pm and IS 240-330pm.
- Julie asked who was the MC and Mr. Larson noted Jim Cane will be doing the sound system and is doing the setup only, he is not the MC, he is using the same equipment as the graduation sound system. Mr. Larson will get Julie and Jim connected to discuss what equipment and cords/etc are needed.

Treasurer's Report

- Started with $38,353.50, deposited $6,207.44 and expensed $4,084.76. Budget total $40,476.18

IS Principal's Report (Eric Larson)

- Thank you to the PTO for the Back to School Fun Night. It was a blast, and I enjoyed manning the popcorn machine.
- Since the fun night, the woods by the playground were opened up. There were some issues with students bringing in acorns. An email was sent out to all families advising nuts nor any outside materials from the woods are allowed back in the school.
- After school clubs are up and running.
- Eric introduced Nick Tedeschi, the IS Band & Chorus teacher. Eric noted this was the largest band year for IS. Nick stated he has 92 students in 4th grade band and about 75 students in 5th grade band. He noted that 4th and 5th grade chorus are around 60 students. Nick talked about the 5th grade chorus going to the Haddam Senior Center to perform in winter and the upcoming winter concert in January. He will have a 5th grade select chorus in the Spring, maybe in Dec, but he is awaiting it to be approved as a club first for Dec.
- IS is looking forward to the Fall festival, it is always a hit with the students. They are still in need of volunteers; sign ups will go out.
- IS town meeting was held this week and they talked about the color run and showed pictures. Students were very excited after seeing the pictures.
- IS is managing through the technology issues, asking to use zip drive for any needs and or call directly.
    - Kristi asked what exactly was happening. Eric noted that IT has noted someone got into the system and caused issues. He does not know more than that and IT is working with BoE and google etc. as noted by Interim Superintendent communications.
- Eric thanked PTO for the funds as they prepare for the upcoming field trips for IS students.

MS Principal's Report (Heather Persson)

- MS is working through the technology issues and thanked everyone for their patience.
- MS had their fire prevention assembly. It went well and the officials said how well-behaved the students were as leaving.
- Thanked PTO for Back to School Fun Night, 8th grade football had fun on field with students there.
- They are looking forward to the new bubble run this year in tandem with the color challenge event.
- MS parent/teacher conferences may be impacted and delayed due to the technology challenges. More information to be sent out next week if needs to be delayed.
- IS noted they use sign up genius for their conference sign ups, and since that is not related to email/google issue, perhaps they can use that at MS. Heather to look into it and until then they are in a holding pattern.
- Heather introduced Steve Fitzgerald, Interim MS Assistant Principal. Steve thanked the PTO for all they do and talked about the town meeting they had, which was a great way to close out the week. He also noted how wonderful trivia night with the kids was.
- Heather introduced Robin to discuss the National Junior Honor Society. Robin noted there were 28 8th grade students inducted this year, after elections were held, and they were announced at the assembly today, 10/9. It was great doing it at the assembly this year for peers to be recognized and for the students to understand the program more. Robin noted that the process will help students prepare for High School and College. Practices start next week.
- 6th graders went to Camp Ingersoll. They had a wonderful time. The climbing wall was a huge hit. It was a great team-building experience.
- 7th grade will be going to Camp Ingersoll. Notice coming out soon.
- 8th grade chorus permission slips going out soon for NYC.
- 7th grade chorus will be taking a trip to the coastguard in the future.

Committees

Bus Driver Appreciation

- Kristi noted we had $800 in budget for this event.
- Nicole noted that Burr asked to be separated this year, they will be doing only their busses with $20/25 gift cards. She asked if we would be willing to also do gift cards only and then Burr will partner with us, and we can include their $300 budget. Julie noted that with $1100 we can do all 55 bus drivers with $20 amazon gift cards. Everyone agreed and Julie noted to also do a thing of cookies one day to the bus offices. Kristi will get this setup.

Fall Festival

- Jesse and Paige are planning most of the event. Almost all activities are the same as LY. They are cancelling the scarecrow. They are planning a photo booth with a picture frame craft. Nicole noted she advised having photos on hand and not do multiples, perhaps just one for each kid/group. Kelly asked about possibly offering a digital copy instead of paper photos so parents can print however many they want.

Book Fair

- Stephanie Ruth & Nicole are heading this event. Book fair is scheduled for same dates as the Dec craft fair.
- Nicole has been talking with Adam Wolanta, local author, who is trying to partner with PTO and host the book fair with his publishing company. Nicole noted that Scholastic has been the partner for many years, they will continue with the partnership this year, as it was already booked and confirmed. She is working with Adam on hosting a smaller tabletop book fair during another event to see what the selection and response is before replacing Scholastic.

Cultural Arts

- Julie noted she is working with Mohegan Museum
- Jazz to hip hop has been booked

Cup Committee

- Some cups have already been removed and Kelly replaced.
- Kelly passed around a new design and new HK colors for cups.

Fundraising

- There is nothing to discuss currently.

Teacher/Staff Appreciation

- Nicole asked what would the teachers like? MS/IS Principals to go back to staff and ask for next meeting.
- Robin noted a few ideas:
    - Buffet style food events preferred, and having treats available all-around staff locations.
    - Luncheons have been in the library prior.
    - Have an order form with things staff can pick from. Then PTO & Volunteers come around to collect the order and deliver the items back, like room service.
    - Help with copying.
    - Volunteers to do lunch duty.

Yearbook

- Nicole is meeting with Emma Inga's Mom 10/10 to discuss the process and who will be doing it.
- NEED PHOTOGRAPHERS! Nicole noted that at Burr Elementary, the art teacher heads the Yearbook committee.
- The 10% discount runs through October. 62 have sold with that discount as of 10/9.
- Nicole discussed the 5th graders to vote on the theme and the vote to occur by November election day.

Welcome Wagon

- Eric from IS noted there are 3 new students and names would be getting to Kelly soon after email is back up.

New Business

- Elections for Executive Board: Mariah Miesel was elected as PTO Secretary.

Meeting adjourned 7:23 pm by Nicole