

Westhill High School School Governance Council
Meeting Minutes
March 7, 2016

In attendance:

- Faculty Members: Camille Figluizzi, Richard Ceroni, Maria DeAngelis, Mark Magisani, Chase Dunlap
- Parents & Community Members: Sue Boria; Jenny Fuchs, Jennifer DiGiacomo, David Greenberg, Sandy Menendez-Aponte, Rick Smeriglio, Patty Denham Travaglino, Alyssa Wallen
- Student members Sam Greenberg, Nicole Somerstein
- Guest attendees Zoe and Anna from WPTSO

New business: Parent Orientation

- David recapped the group's interest in increasing parent involvement through orientation of freshmen parents
- Goal: Make parents socially comfortable and familiar with the layout of the school; see guidance counselors in a more informal setting; create links into the faculty and other parents
- Targeting holding this session in August, requiring a good turnout of upperclassmen parents (SGC, WPTSO, clubs, sports teams, etc)
- There needs to be a draw (food; partner with PTSO to provide? Food trucks?)
- First day of school September 1; orientation is Wednesday, August 31
- We would like to hold this session prior to the freshmen night so incoming parents are already connected to the school and thus more likely to participate in future events
- Light dinner or apps followed by a tour of the building in the courtyard
- Freshmen parent night is around September 7 or 8; we would like to be earlier than that with whatever event we offer
- Send bus downtown for transportation
- Run a movie in the auditorium for kids; ice cream
- Have older students who are there talk about summer reading, the importance of getting it done and project due dates
- The WPTSO has also been considering doing a parent event to welcome newcomers and getting them on campus; the group was thinking about making it a daytime event with a band and food / food trucks during the fall
- Avoid "orientation" as the label; this night would be for a different purpose (Facilitating linkages between the new parents and parents of upperclassmen, getting parents comfortable with the school)
- Westhill Street Fair is a suggested name
- Zoe: intimate gathering in courtyard vs. a block party – which is the environment we want to foster? (the group agreed we are looking for more intimacy / less block party for this event)

- We agreed: the SGC and PTO will sponsor and host the event together
- Target date: Monday, August 29, 6:30 - 8:30
- Action item: Jenny will call the pizza trucks to line up participation
- We will form a committee at our next SGC meeting
- Get a big cross-section of parent volunteers: veteran parents, sports parents, club parents, Spanish speaking parents, etc.
- Consider promoting at Cloonan / TOR graduation; put in graduation program
- Include information in communications with 8th graders
- Hook: create a list of frequently asked questions – but with no answers included in the flyer “Come to the event to get your answers”
- Action: Nicole will draft a flyer for the group’s review

New business: Parent Mentors

- Parent mentoring: providing freshmen parents with upperclassmen parents they can call – PTO would like to be included
- Target parents associated with clubs, sports teams, etc. to be involved in mentoring
- Incoming freshmen parent night: we had 26 parents indicate they were interested in having a mentor (Jenny has the sign-up information)
- We may be able to survey the parents who indicated they were interested to learn more about what they would like to learn from a mentor / get out of the relationship
- Think through how we go about matching up incoming parents with mentor parents
- Jenny will write something to gather parent mentors to be inserted in the Westhill PTSO newsletter

New business: Land Crew speakers

- Very successful speaker last week – Georgette Pascale
- Dr. Eric Kung up next (CEO Stamford Young Artists Philharmonic BoD, neurologist, SHS graduate) on Friday, March 18 12 - 1 pm
- In touch with athletic director at UConn – perhaps a field trip
- Colleagues at Save the Children and AmeriCares who have done service in foreign countries also being considered
- Randy Skigen April 29
- June 16 celebration of seniors, to start a tradition of acknowledgement
- Rick attended Georgette’s session, along with 75-100 students (inclusive of a marketing class)
- Contacting music groups, psychology classes to invite them to Dr. Kung’s speech
- Focus in the speakers’ series is on innovation, vision, perseverance, character traits of being successful

Old business: Land Crew grant writing

- Chase would like a group interested in working on grants
- Preliminary application due for one in a few weeks
- Patty volunteered for grant writing, along with Sandy

- Hardest thing would be getting the data needed for the application from the City of Stamford Research department – first things first
- Karen Cammerota came to Westhill to meet with Chase, Camille and Patty to discuss grant writing for LanD Crew
- Action: Patty, Sandy and Chase to meet Friday, March 11 in the afternoon

New business: SGC Bylaws

- Mandated by state
- Bylaws are included in the binders that Camille shared with us when we first convened as a group

Action items

- Jenny will contact pizza trucks for August event; will write up something for the newsletter to drive interest in becoming a parent mentor
- Patty and Sandy will work with Chase on grant writing
- Patty to contact Karen Cammerota to identify any further grant opportunities LanD Crew can tap into
- Nicole volunteered to make a flyer to send to middle school graduation advertising our event on Monday, August 29 from 6:30 - 8:30, perhaps with the angle of “everything you wanted to know but were afraid to ask”

Next meeting

Monday, April 25 at 6:15 pm at Westhill High School

All welcome to attend