



**Stuyvesant High School Parents' Association  
Minutes of the General Meeting of September 27, 2012**

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:11 p.m. by Co-President Peter Galasinao.
2. Approval of Minutes of June 12, 2012 meeting:  
A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes. A vote was taken and the minutes were approved.
3. Co-Presidents' Greetings and Introduction of Officers:  
Co-President Christina Ross introduced the PA officers and welcomed the parents.
4. Parent Coordinator Harvey Blumm's Greetings:  
Parent Coordinator Harvey Blumm asked that parents reach out to him about problems, no matter how small. He will help with communications with teachers. Harvey has heard from the faculty that the school year is off to a good start.
5. Ratification of PA Committee Chairs and Discussion of Committee Structure:  
Co-President Christina Ross explained the PA Committee structure at Stuyvesant. She noted how important the Committees are to the Stuyvesant Community. She read off a list of Committees and their newly appointed Chairs and pointed out that the Extra-Curricular, Programming and Spring Feast Committees all need Chairs and she reached out for volunteers. She also made a plea for volunteers to serve on the various Committees and reminded those in attendance that sign-up sheets were available in the Lobby. A motion was made and seconded to ratify the Committee Chairs that had already been appointed. A vote was taken and the Chairs were ratified. The Chairs include:
  - Academic Affairs – Alta Indelman
  - Appropriations – Barbara Reiser
  - Audit – Steven Bloom
  - College – Helen Van Rhyn & Susan Mendelsohn
  - Communications – Wei Lam
  - Faculty Reception & Hospitality – Meredith Flomenbaum & Julie Law
  - Fundraising – Dave Fishelson
  - Health & Safety – Susan Mendelsohn
  - Independent Research – Theresa Jacob & Rodanthy Tzani-Polykronakos
  - Integrity – Dave Venderbush
  - Membership Outreach – Chinese – James Du & Lixin Zhang
  - Membership Outreach – Korean – Jihae Jung
6. PA Newsletter:  
Communications Chair Wei Lam made a presentation about *The Bulletin*, the Styvesant PA's quarterly newsletter that is published in English, Chinese and Korean. She encouraged all parents who are writers, photographers, graphics designers, Chinese or Korean translators, or business managers to consider joining the all-volunteer staff. Wei pointed out that some staff members find the experience so rewarding, they continue to participate long after their children graduate. The print version of *The Bulletin* is mailed to every Stuyvesant family's home four times a year and each issue requires about a month of preparation time. The on-line version, which is posted shortly after the print version is mailed, is even more content-rich with additional articles and full-color photo galleries. It is also translated into Chinese and Korean.
7. Election Process:  
Michele Herman, Senior SLT rep, standing in for 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President Dave Venderbush, described the upcoming election process. There are three annual PA Elections: two at the end of the school year to elect PA officers and SLT representatives (except for the freshman rep positions) and one in October to elect the freshman SLT reps and the PA members-at-large for all classes. Michele explained how much it means for the students and the school when parents volunteer and urged parents to get involved! Michele noted that the following are open positions:
  - (1) Freshman SLT Rep (the runner up serves as an Alternate Freshman SLT Rep)
  - (5) Freshman members-at-large
  - (3) Sophomore members-at-large
  - (1) Junior member-at-large
  - (1) Senior member-at-large

Michele requested a volunteer from the floor to join the nominating committee. Parent Julie Sterling volunteered.

Michele advised that to run for a position, prospective candidates must submit a nomination form by October 9<sup>th</sup>. Forms are available online and paper versions are available in the auditorium and in the most recently mailed copy of *The Bulletin*.

8. Presentation of FY2012 Audit & Financial Review:

Treasurer Steven Bloom reviewed the FY 2012 audit. He gave an overview of the process by which revenue is collected, budgeted and distributed by the PA. PA appropriations typically total around \$150,000 per year. This year, appropriations has a \$180,000 budget. There are usually two, but occasionally three appropriations cycles per school year. Steven talked about the Annual Appeal and indicated that our Annual Appeal income to date is significantly lower than it was last year at the same time. It will not affect this year's budget but will impact next year's budget since the PA's expense budget is funded by revenues raised in the prior year. Treasurer Steven Bloom explained the audit process in response to a parent's question.

In response to a question from the floor, "Why aren't we spending more money?," Assistant Treasurer Wei Lam explained that we aggressively cut some of our expenses last year, and there was insufficient time to add a third bonus cycle to give out more appropriations dollars. Some of the applications in the first two rounds were not ready for funding. When the PA has unspent funds at the end of each year, those funds are added to a reserve fund. This reserve fund is critical. Because we raised fewer dollars than projected last year, last May we requested the membership to approve money from the reserve funds to allow us to have a fully-funded expense budget this year. The reserve fund allows the PA to be flexible in meeting the school's emergency needs without having to defund other critical PA mission items in order to cover an unexpected school crisis. If this year's annual appeal fund doesn't gain momentum, we will need to dip into the reserve fund again to fund next year's budget. Roughly \$300k has been allocated for this year's budget. The net amount in the reserve fund, not yet budgeted for current needs, is approximately \$200k. The flexibility that the reserve fund allows for in the event of state or city budget cuts or other unexpected needs is critical to the PA's mission.

9. Approval of Remainder Appropriations Item from June 2012:

Barbara Reiser, Chair of the Appropriations Committee, presented an item that was left off of last year's appropriations approval list: a request in the amount of \$3500 for expenses related to the operation of the theater/auditorium. A motion was made, seconded and voted upon to approve the appropriation of \$3500. One vote in oppositions to the motion was cast.

10. Major Upcoming Events:

Pete Galasinao took the podium and noted the following upcoming events and urged parents to attend and/or participate:

Elections at next PA General Meeting Tuesday, October 16.

Kal Chany, author of *How to Pay for College Without Going Broke*, will speak at the October 16<sup>th</sup> PA General Meeting.

Faculty Reception, Thursday, October 25.

Parent Teacher Conferences, Thursday October 25 and Friday, October 26.

11. Student presentations:

Senior Tamara Kahan briefly described the research project she is working on and requested that the parents in attendance that evening please assist her by completing the Research Project Questionnaire she had prepared and distributed to parents as they arrived for the meeting. Senior David Kurkovskiy, president of the honor society ARISTA, described the peer tutoring options available to students.

12. Principal, I.A., Jie Zhang's Greetings:

Principal I.A., Jie Zhang greeted the parents. She spoke of the intense month since Stan Tietel retired and she became principal, IA. Principal Zhang gave a brief personal and professional history. She started her professional career as a math teacher, but eventually become a school administrator and held assistant principal and principal positions at two high schools in Queens. Ms. Zhang welcomes direct communications with parents. She hopes every parent will feel comfortable about approaching her to address their needs. The principal is actively looking for suggestions. Ms. Zhang's remarks were followed by an extensive question and answer period.

- One parent expressed concern that the number of electives has been reduced. Is this temporary or permanent? The principal is looking into this and her goal is for the school to offer the most possible courses.
- Another parent asked about the number of college counselors currently working at the school. Principal Zhang explained that there are currently 3 college counselors. One plans to retire. There is a process underway to fill the position and there will be an overlap of a few weeks. Internal candidates are being interviewed first and the principal hopes that this will be resolved within a week.
- Another parent expressed concern about the lack of continuity with both guidance and college counselors. The principal indicated that the administration is quite aware of this issue and is working on doing the best possible under the circumstances.
- A question was asked about how colleges are viewing Stuyvesant in light of the cheating scandal.

Principal Zhang explained that our reputation has been hurt. The media continues to report on the subject and the school suffers from the continued negative attention. Some of the media is not official. Principal Zhang has been working closely with the Stuyvesant community to rebuild the school's reputation and show that the school has a tradition of academic excellence. The school's college counselors have had conversations with college admission offices and a number of colleges have assured Stuyvesant that it will not be judged by one incident. The most important thing is that we are moving forward to improve the social environment at Stuyvesant without diminishing academic rigor. Principal Zhang noted, "I hope to enforce all our policies consistently. Hopefully the students will internalize some of the concepts and be better at making judgments."

- A parent asked how we can get positive media coverage to counter the negative publicity. Principal Zhang said that the school is in the process of wrapping up the DOE investigation and in about a week, Stuyvesant will move forward and promote the school in a positive way. "We are working as a community and are developing an honor code. We want to move on and go about our normal business."
- In response to a question, Principal Zhang agreed to organize a freshman assembly to greet the students that she couldn't greet in the afternoon session of Camp Stuy because of a scheduling conflict.
- A parent asked if there is a reason to believe that the cheating problem is pervasive school-wide and if all students are assumed to be cheaters. Principal Zhang responded that students are not assumed to be cheaters but that there is a need to address the idea of academic integrity school-wide so that we can move on. Principal Zhang asked parents to think about parental pressure imposed on students and how that can be relieved. From the school's side, there is a grading policy revision being studied to emphasize learning over grade points. Time management skills will also be addressed.
- One parent asked if outdated textbooks will be replaced. His child has a biology textbook from 1993. The administration is looking into it.
- A question came up regarding the homework load. The principal is determined to look into homework quality control.
- One parent suggested a monthly breakfast with the principal for parents and guidance counselors. Principal Zhang was receptive and hopes to look into the possibility of planning such events.

13. Adjournment: A motion to adjourn the meeting was made. The motion was seconded, voted upon and the meeting adjourned at 8:47 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted by Alta Indelman, Recording Secretary*