



Bellaire PTO Meeting – January 21, 2021

Meeting Minutes (Meeting conducted via Zoom)

Call to Order: President David Faris called the meeting to order at 6:01pm.

President's Report: David welcomed all attendees to the meeting. The agenda for the meeting was displayed and reviewed.

The minutes from the November 19, 2020 general meeting were presented for review. There was a motion to accept the minutes as presented. The motion received a second and the meeting minutes were approved by vote.

VP of Communications: Nisha Lobo reported that the second PTO newsletter was recently distributed via email. She asked that PTO members share the successes and achievements of our Bellaire students and teachers with the PTO board, so these may be included in upcoming newsletters. David Faris reminded attendees to sign up for the newsletter via the PTO website (bellairepto.org). Members might also need to check their email "spam" folders, to be sure that the PTO newsletters are not filtered from inboxes.

VP of Membership: Kelly Bluhm announced that the planned coffee event and the Principal's Reception for donors will be a combined virtual event. There will be a general presentation from Mr. McDonough, followed by break-out sessions for parents based on various topics. Mr. McDonough will also join the various rooms to answer additional parent questions. The event is scheduled for February 25, 2021 at 6:30 pm. "Save the date" information will be sent to attendees in the next week or so.

David Faris also reminded parents that the PTO continues to support the school and the education of all Bellaire High students through money raised in the "Commitment to Learning" (CTL) campaign. Donations are much lower than in previous years, but the PTO continues to support teacher events, provide supplemental learning materials, and fund student summer scholarships. Any donation amount is appreciated and donations can be made online at bellairepto.org or checks may be sent to the school address (attention PTO). Recent requests from the school include educational subscriptions for padlet (cost \$1300.00) and Delta Math (cost \$2550.00). We would love to provide these tools for the school, but we are relying on additional member donations to do so. Finally, we are continuing to sell Bellaire

High School and Bellaire High School Class of 2021 yard signs for \$15 each. They may be purchased on the PTO website or by contacting David Faris, directly.

VP School Relations: Rachel Berger and her volunteers are continuing plans for the 2021 Mr. Bellaire contest. The event will likely be a combination of virtual and in-person and is planned for mid-April. Additional volunteers for the event will be needed. Members should watch for upcoming emails from Rachel Berger.

Treasurer's Report (by David Faris): The financials were presented. The PTO has raised nearly \$23,000.00, but donations are down considerably from last year. We continue to assist the school with events such as teacher appreciation events and Cardinal Camp. Every donation helps the PTO to provide items for the school and all amounts are greatly appreciated.

Principal's Report: Mr. McDonough thanked everyone for attending the meeting and thanked the PTO for providing treats to the faculty and staff just before winter break and on their return to school.

The new building remains on schedule. As soon as school ends in mid-June, staff will begin moving into the new building. The move process will be completed in 2 weeks. On June 28 or soon after, demolition of the old building and site clearing will begin. It is estimated that demolition and site preparation will take 2 - 2-1/2 months, then construction will begin on the parking garage. Construction of the administration wing will be the final phase.

Varsity athletics are competing, but the district has put some sub-varsity level teams on a temporary competition hold.

Currently, a little more than 500 students are registered as "in-person", but day-to-day attendance at the school is typically 200-250 students. Mr. McDonough does not anticipate any substantial changes for the cycle 4 period.

Final exams begin next week. A spreadsheet with final exam schedules was posted on the school website and was included in last week's Cardinal e-news.

The 9th grade PSAT was postponed. Dates for the 10th and 11th grade SAT exams will be announced soon.

Mr. McDonough does not anticipate any significant changes to the spring semester calendar. Graduation plans are currently being reviewed and dates will be announced as soon as they are available.

Last Thursday, January 14, was the anniversary of Cesar Cortez's death. It was a somber and respectful day on campus. A group of students organized a virtual event in Cesar's memory. His family was included in the event and they expressed their appreciation for the gesture.

Administration will be sending a survey to senior students in early February gauging interest in end-of-year events. It is hoped that the students will help to plan events or come up with alternative ways to hold traditional senior events. There has been no decision made on prom. In response to a

question from a PTO member, Mr. McDonough anticipated the start of the 2021-22 school year to be on August 23rd, with no significant changes to the school calendar.

Guest Speaker: Ms. Tracy Lehman, Nick Finnegan Counseling Center

Ms. Lehman, a licensed marriage / family counselor, gave an informative presentation on understanding how the teenage brain responds to stress and anxiety, as well as how to help our students deal with stress. She started the presentation by leading attendees through a mindfulness exercise and then introducing / differentiating between stress and anxiety. She described some strategies for helping kids to cope with stress. She emphasized a nurturing parent-child relationship and encouraged parents to meet their child on their level. Possible activities to open lines of communication include going for a walk or engaging in one of the child's hobbies. Relationships with peers are also important for teens and they may require some guidance and modeling of ways to maintain social relationships when many contacts are virtual rather than face to face. In supporting kids dealing with academic stresses, she mentioned acknowledging effort and letting children know that they can grow and come back from failures. Rather than asking about specific grades, she suggested asking kids questions such as "How did it feel?" Additional coping mechanisms included encouraging good sleep schedules, a varied diet, and regular exercise. To address test anxiety, encourage kids to practice mindfulness or simulate the test experience at home, perhaps by using timed self-testing or timed practice writing exercises. In some cases, parents may need to seek help for the children. Some possible warning signs for more serious distress include panic attacks, withdrawal / isolation, or anger outbursts. Following her presentation, Ms. Lehman responded to questions from attendees.

Meeting adjourned at 7:25 pm

Minutes submitted by Anne Kayl, Secretary