



Bellaire PTO Meeting – May 10, 2022

(Meeting conducted at Bellaire High School Auditorium)

Call to Order: President Judy Cheng called the meeting to order at 6:06 pm.

Judy Cheng welcomed all those in attendance. She reminded those in attendance that this was not a “town hall” meeting and was being held in the auditorium to allow for the large number of expected attendees. She stated that the meeting would be run as a typical PTO meeting, including officer reports, a report from the Principal (to be provided by the Dean of Instruction, Debbie Campbell) and remarks from the acting principal, Dr. Franklin. She also asked for participants to sign in on the paper sheets outside the auditorium or through the QR code link provided.

Approval of Minutes from 3/24/22: The minutes of the 3/24/22 general meeting were distributed via email prior to the meeting and have been posted on the BHS PTO website. There was a motion to accept the 3/24/22 minutes as presented. The motion received a second and the meeting minutes were approved.

Presentation of Executive Board 2022-2023 Slate: Kent Cantrell presented the 2022-2023 slate of Executive Officers. Judy Cheng noted that the slate has already been approved by the nominating committee and did not require a motion prior to a vote. She provided an opportunity for discussion / questions. There was none. A vote was called for and the slate was elected.

Introduction of BHS Wraparound Resource Specialist: The new Resource Specialist, Simone Gardner, was unable to attend in person. Introduction was made via a Teams link. Judy Cheng explained that Ms. Gardner is new to BHS and will be providing support to the 1500 economically-disadvantaged students attending BHS (and all other students, as needed).

Ms. Gardner stated that her main role is to refer students to resources available and to make sure that those resources have been vetted by HISD. The primary focus is on addressing issues such as food insecurity, mental health, etc. Students receive services through a referral process. That process can be anonymous, through the Student Assistance Form (SAF). Once she receives an SAF, she begins linking the student to services. She can also be reached through Debbie Campbell or Judy Cheng. She stated that she is excited to be a part of BHS.

Judy Cheng opened the floor for questions. There were no questions from those in attendance.

VP of Communications: Amy Allen announced that there will be a parent social event on 5/23/22 at 5:00 pm at The '401 in Bellaire. The owner of The '401 is a BHS alumnae and has donated the space for the event. Amy stated that she hopes to see everyone there.

Amy also reviewed how to sign up for BHS email and newsletters. To receive the electronic communications, go the BHS PTO website (bellairepto.org), the "support" tab, and then to "sign up for PTO emails". The process is not automatic with membership. Individuals need to sign up via the website to receive email from the BHS PTO.

VP of Membership: Kelly Bluhm noted that she and co-chair Cristina Vetrano will be rotating out of their roles in the fall. They had set a goal to have 10% of BHS families join the PTO and fell just a bit short at 8%. She is still accepting memberships and asked those attending to reach out to incoming freshman parents and ask them to join the BHS PTO and attend our events.

Judy Cheng added that historically membership has been around 100 families, so we exceeded that benchmark. She reminded parents that their involvement and attendance at meetings is one of the things that makes BHS great.

VP School Relations: Rachel Berger stated that they have had 6 "Fun Foods Friday" events with great success. The funds raised benefitted the class of 2022 and their after prom party. After prom will be held at the Houston Museum of Natural Science, right after prom concludes, and runs until about 2:00 am. It provides a safe place for students to continue their celebration. She added that other classes are also going to be short of funds to cover their after prom events, due to our lack of food sales and other fundraising activities during the COVID pandemic. The Fun Foods Friday events helped to raise money for the purchase of after prom prizes. The Amazon wish list was also a success and several gift items were donated through that avenue. The parking space auction has been postponed until Mr. McDonough can add his thoughts. Rachel asked parents to check out the sign-up genius links for after prom volunteers, as well as volunteers and donation options for the Teacher Appreciation Lunch (that link should be available next week). For the luncheon, she will need volunteers, monetary donations for the purchase of desserts, or dessert donations. The call for help is urgent this year since our inability to have food sales really hurt fundraising for all the classes. She hopes we are able to get these events back next year to raise money for the other BHS classes.

Treasurer's Report: Keith Desrosiers gave a brief presentation on PTO finances. Current income is just over \$66,000 and expenses are approximately \$48,000. Net income is \$15,894.00. The PTO does not expect any significant income for the remainder of the school year. More expenses will be coming, but we have the funds for those. He reminded those attending that the majority of the PTO income comes from membership and corporate matching programs. We did have some unexpected expenses, including rental of tables and chairs for the AP / IB testing and support for the BHS Quiz Bowl team. Finally the 2022-23 report and budget are being compiled. More information will be shared at a later date.

Secretary: No report

Past President: Past President David Faris was unable to attend this meeting. Judy Cheng announced that he does have Class of 2022 yard signs and general Bellaire High School yard signs available for sale. Please contact him for purchase and delivery of a sign. His address can also be found on the PTO website or in the weekly Cardinal e-news.

Parliamentarian: No additional report.

Additional Remarks: Judy Cheng announced that the PTO student summer awards applications are open through 5/16/22. Mr. Brian Smith will be leading the selection committee. Judy also thanked the BHS JROTC cadets for helping to guide parents to the auditorium for tonight's meeting.

Principal's Report: Provided by Debbie Campbell and acting principal / SSO Dr. Franklin.

Debbie Campbell started by saying that she will providing updates and news that Mr. McDonough would have shared had he been in attendance. These are events that have been in the planning process for months and Mr. McDonough has "his hands all over these". STAAR testing was completed last week and she thanked Ms. Mulet for her help. The school is in the midst of administering over 2,000 AP and IB exams. They are using every inch of the school for testing. Prom will be held this Saturday, at the Museum of Natural Science. After prom is sponsored by the PTO and the class of 2022. She also thanked Ms. Frank for her help in planning prom. The final exam schedule has been posted. Senior exams start on 5/27/22 and 9 – 11 grade exams start on 6/2/22. Senior class activities start on 6/3/22. There will be a rehearsal for graduation and a senior luncheon on Main Street. Graduation is on 6/12/22. There is no limit on tickets, but parking rates have been increased to \$20 per car. These rates are set by the NRG stadium group and are not controlled by the school or by HISD. Summer school will be held at Pin Oak Middle School. Registration is 5/16/22 – 6/3/22. Summer school runs from 6/13/22 – 7/7/22. Regarding BHS construction, Turner takes over the school and begins working on the fields on 6/9/22. There will be heavy construction all summer. By the time that teachers return on 8/8/22, all the Main Street construction, college center, TPP room, and parking garage should be available. The courtyard, library and administrative wing will open gradually. All construction should be completed by mid-January.

Judy Cheng opened the floor for questions. There were none.

Remarks from Trustee Sue Deigaard: Judy introduced our HISD school board trustee, Sue Deigaard. Ms. Deigaard stated that she has received a tremendous amount of email regarding the reassignment of Mr. McDonough. She apologized for being unable to respond to each email. She shared a personal story about her experience as a parent in HISD, at a school where the principal was put on administrative leave. She stated that she knows the questions that parents have and the worries we

face, but she does not have any information to give or answers to provide regarding the investigation. She stated that she has asked HISD to provide a name and contact information for someone to take comments and answer questions (no one has been named yet). Additional questions she hopes to have answered concern the continuity for this academic year and plans for the next year. She stated again that she empathizes with parent concerns, but she does not have any answers and would be unable to comment on personnel investigations even if she had information.

Judy Cheng added that an outside legal firm has been hired to complete the investigation. She has asked for a swift and fair completion of the investigation. She has also asked HISD leadership to consider the fact that those dollars used for an investigation should be going to the schools.

Questions from attendees:

Where has Mr. McDonough been reassigned? How is the hiring of an outside firm to handle the investigation not a conflict of interest since HISD hired them? Sue Deigaard (SD) stated she has no answers.

Dr. Franklin (DF) remarked that this is just a process and even if she had answers or information, she would be unable to comment in order to protect the integrity of the investigation.

Is there a time line for the investigation?: (DF) there is no timeline, but interviews are taking place.

As acting principal, are you here every day? (DF) Yes, I'm here every day. She is communicating with Mr. McDonough and he's still involved in school operations.

How many people are planning on going to the HISD meeting on Thursday? Would it be helpful for graduating seniors to come? (SD) Legally, they don't discuss personnel issues in an open session. Parents are able to come and speak, but they must sign up to speak by Wednesday at noon. The more speakers that sign up, the less time is allowed for each speaker.

Will the outside counsel be there? (SD) No information has been given. This is no different from any other investigation in that personnel decisions are not discussed at Board meetings. All personnel decisions are at the HISD level.

Comments by BHS teacher, Jennifer Blessington: The faculty and staff are very supportive of Mr. MCDonough. They were all shocked by how this reassignment transpired. Teachers were informed via robocalls while they were in class. The way this was rolled out was very destabilizing and upsetting for all of BHS.

Response (SD): She has shared her concerns on the process with district administrators. She was told, “that’s how it’s done”. There should be an opportunity for reflection on “how” it was done, so it’s not so disruptive to student learning and also give dignity to the employee.

Can Mr. McDonough at least be part of the graduation ceremony for our kids? (SD) I have no information on what the principal will or will not be allowed to do.

Many parents choose BHS because of Mr. McDonough and could choose private schools over a public school. Does the district realize that? (SD) Asked for a show of hands from parents considering leaving BHS. Several hands were raised.

Judy Cheng added that she had invited several HISD administrators (high level, including the Superintendent) to attend tonight. Several did not respond, but Sue Deigaard decided to attend. Judy Cheng reminded those attending that trustees are volunteers and can only do so much. Judy Cheng does have a meeting scheduled with Mr. House this Friday, but acknowledged that she probably won’t get any clear answers.

Is there a person we can talk to at HISD? (SD) reminded attendees of Board structure. Trustees have input on the hiring of two people: Superintendent and the Chief Auditing Executive. Ninety-five percent of all emails that she gets have to be forwarded to someone in the district to be solved. The board of trustees has no authority to tell the superintendent what to do.

To Dr. Franklin: What will next year look like? Who is making teacher hiring decisions? (DF) I’m not here to “change anything”. Her role is simply to step in. She and Mr. McDonough are communicating by email. All processes are still in place and he has sent offer letters to potential new hires.

Why wouldn’t someone from within BHS be appointed as interim or acting principal? We have Assistant Principals who understand our culture. Why was someone from outside the school assigned? (DF) I’m not from outside. I have been the SSO for the school for 5 years. Her role is to approve things on Mr. McDonough’s behalf.

Why has there been no teacher staff meeting or more communication with staff? (DF) There has not been a meeting. There is a protocol. I can call a meeting, but I can’t answer any questions so it would just be talking.

Is hiring outside counsel standard? (SD) I’m not usually involved in the process, but HISD uses outside counsel all the time for various processes.

The majority of people [in the BHS community] are convinced that Mr. McDonough is beyond reproach. Why has this potentially spurious accusation gotten traction in HISD? Why did HISD decide to take action so close to the end of the school year and in such a disruptive way? Was this related to Mr. McDonough speaking out against the FTE school funding proposal? (SD) HISD leadership will take the report and use the findings to make a decision. Administration will not speak to an ongoing investigation.

Comment from a BHS teacher: This is the first time I've seen Dr. Franklin. I came to BHS because of Mr. McDonough and if he does not return, it could be the reason I don't return, as well. He is the face of this school and many teachers don't want to return if he does not return. The teachers deserve an answer before they sign contracts for next year.

How do we support Mr. McDonough? Judy Cheng (JC) response: I know he has amazing support from students, teachers, and the community. We need to flood HISD leaders with email and supporting letters (all these should reach the legal team). If you wish to speak at the Board meeting on Thursday, you must sign up to speak and please be familiar with the protocol. The meeting agenda item C-1-D was added to the agenda (BHS update in closed session). You can request to speak to this agenda item. You must sign up by noon on Wednesday if you want to speak.

Kent Cantrell added that the superintendent will be at the meeting and that is why we need to show support and say something positive about how Mr. McDonough has impacted the school. Judy Cheng reminded parents and students to please follow HISD meeting protocol. Read the rules / procedures and go out to represent BHS in a positive manner.

Judy Cheng thanked everyone for attending the meeting. In order to be respectful of the time of our administrators and teachers, the meeting was adjourned at 7:16 pm. Judy Cheng and Sue Deigaard remained to answer additional questions.

Meeting adjourned at 7:16 pm.

Minutes submitted by Anne Kayl, Secretary