



Minutes of the General Meeting
Wednesday, February 7, 2024

In Attendance:

Katie Devitt, Anne Kay, Patrice Duker, Margaret Murphy, Lisa Mundy, Maggie Liljegren, Kristen Tsarnas, Christine Ferrarie, Barbara Lobo, Grace Perruzzi, Thao Groenewald, Lynelle Tedesco, Janeen Skripak, Christi Yu, Julie De Jesus-Evans, Sonia Chadha Agarwal, Jess Carlin, Kathy Glynn, Shantala Kaikini, Susan Esserman, Kathy Travers, Rachel Milston, Lorraine Reichert, Alison White, Anna Maria Pochatko, Yunha Bang, Lisa Ellison

School Administration in Attendance:

Dr. Scot Beckerman, Mr. Joseph Occhino, Mr. Michael Koth, Mr. Jose Madhavasseril, Dr. Jessica Verdicchio, Ms. Christine Wegert

HASA President, Katie Devitt, welcomed and thanked everyone for joining the call. She called the meeting to order at 9:15 am. She opened the meeting to the administration for their updates.

Superintendent's Update – Dr. Scot Beckerman

Dr. Beckerman provided the following updates:

- The district is close to finalizing the 2024-2025 school budget and expects to make it public to the community in March.
- The district is also finalizing staffing for the 2024-2025 school year.
- On the referendum:
 - The district is moving forward with the last of the referendum projects – the library and the old fitness center. Both the library and the old fitness center will be closed during the April break as construction will begin in these spaces.
 - The district remains on track to open the new fitness center by the end of March and the turf field should be completed by Friday, February 9.
- Dr. Beckerman announced that the school board approved the retirement for Dr. Robin Knutelsky, Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment for Northern Highlands. Dr. Knutelsky will remain in her role until the end of July. The district is currently in the process of interviewing candidates to replace her.

Principal's Update – Mr. Joseph Occhino

Mr. Occhino provided the following update:

- A number of communications will be distributed via Constant Contact over the next few weeks including information on:
 - The annual Pride Survey which assists Northern Highlands in determining drug and alcohol use in our school and communities.

- In March, there will be a communication regarding State testing. The first one will be on NJGPA which is the New Jersey Graduation proficiency assessment and is required for all juniors.
- Upcoming events include:
 - The Freshman Boomerang Project Social on February 13, 2024 at 7:00 pm.
 - The spring musical, [Mama Mia](#), which take place on Friday, February 29, 2024, March 1-2, 2024. All performances begin at 7:00 pm. There will also be a performance on March 3 at 2:00 pm. All performances take place in Hopkins Hall at Northern Highlands.
- Winter recess is Monday, February 19, 2024 and Tuesday, February 20, 2024.

School Counseling Update – Ms. Christine Wegert, Director of School Counseling

Ms. Wegert provided the following updates:

- The School Counseling Department hosted two evening programs in January for eighth grade parents in Allendale, Ho-Ho-Kus, Saddle River and Upper Saddle River to learn more about the course selection process and the transitioning to high school.
- School counselors are continuing to meet with students regarding their schedules for the 2024-2025 school year. [Click here](#) to view all courses offered at Northern Highlands, course descriptions and requirements. Once the scheduling process concludes parents will receive an email to review and approve the courses their child selected in Genesis. Hard copies will also be sent home as well.
- The School Counseling Department has sent invitations to junior parents to sign up for their child’s junior conference. Appointments are available in February, March, and April. Appointments can be made through Genesis. View the parent communication regarding junior conferences [here](#).
- The School Counseling Department will be hosting a career day on Thursday, April 25, 2024 and is still looking for presenters to speak on a variety of careers, both traditional and cutting edge. Learn more about Career Day and how to sign up to be a presenter [here](#).
- The Princeton Review will be hosting an SAT prep course at Northern Highlands, April 13, 2024 through May 29, 2024 on Monday and Wednesday evenings from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm to help prepare students for the June SAT. For more information, contact The Princeton Review at 1-800-2REVIEW.
- View the February edition of the School Counseling Department’s newsletter [here](#).

Assistant Principal of Athletic – Mr. Michael Koth

Mr. Koth provided the following update:

- The Northern Highlands Sports Association hosted a successful Pastamania event on Thursday, February 1, 2024. Thank you to all who attended and supported the event.
- The latest installment of the national letter of intent signing day for student athletes was held on Wednesday, February 7, 2024 at Northern Highlands. Six student athletes signed their letters of intent to play on a collegiate level.
- He also provided the following winter sports update:

- February is tournament time for winter sports as county tournaments have either wrapped up or are wrapping up.
- Teams are also ramping up for the state tournaments.
- The boys basketball team has reached the semi-finals of the Bergen County Jamboree for the first time in 20 years. The boy's next game in the county tournament will be held on Saturday, February 10 at 3:00 pm at Hackensack High School versus Don Bosco. They had a big win on February 6, 2024 versus a non-conference opponent, St. Thomas Aquinas.
- The girls basketball team fell from the Bergen County tournament a little earlier than they would have liked and are 15-6.
- The hockey team played in the semi-finals of the county tournament but lost to Bergen Catholic 6-3. They continue to be one of the top 10 teams in the state and one of the top public-school teams in New Jersey. They will compete in the big North Cup tournament Friday, February 9, 2024 against Pascack Valley. Three players have achieved the 100-career point mark on the hockey team. They are Vincenzo Capano, Brent Beswick, and Jake Baratta.
- Wrestling has had an up and down season. They did not qualify for the state tournament, however, they look to rebound against Glen Rock in one of their final dual meets of the season on February 7, 2024. Ethan Mendel, who finished second in the county tournament in January and Jake Gray are both looking to compete on a district and region level and are looking to represent Northern Highlands in the state tournament Atlantic City in late February.
- Both the boys and girls swimming team qualified for the state tournament.
- Northern Highlands cheer continues to thrive in the big North dual meets. They fell just short of a wild card for the for the playoffs.
- The bowling team finished up their county tournament and are looking forward towards the state tournament.
- The indoor track team had an impressive showing it the Big North Freedom Division meet. Both the boys and girls track team took third place in the meet. The girls continued to do well in the county relays last week and are looking forward to the upcoming State meet.

Wellness Department Update – Dr. Jessica Verdicchio, Supervisor of Wellness & Equity

Dr. Verdicchio provided the following updates:

- On February 21, 2024, the Wellness Department will host a special presentation for the administration of Northern Highlands on the school's JED survey results. The JED Foundation works with high schools on strengthening their mental health resources and programming. This presentation will share results of the survey and provide insight into how the school has grown in the past three years.
- On March 6, 2024, the Wellness Department will be administering the pride survey. This survey looks to gain information on the use of drugs and alcohol and substance trends within the school community. The results of the survey will assist Northern Highlands in applying for grants and conducting programming that are beneficial to Northern Highlands students and parents.

- On March 6, 2004, the [Northern Highlands Parent Academy and Speakers Series](#) (NHPASS) will host “Achieving Goals Through Adversity” which will feature Aaron Golub, the first legally blind athlete to play D1 football. Register for the program [here](#).

Board of Education Update – Maggie Liljegren

Maggie Liljegren provided the following update:

- The Board of Education held its workshop meeting on Monday, February 5, 2024. During the meeting, the board welcomed a new board member, Lynn McCarthy from Allendale. The Board also said farewell to Dr. Sheila Yallowitz who has been on the board for the past 12 years.
- During the February meeting, the Board of Education, along with Principal Mr. Joseph Occhino, recognized Northern Highlands Educator of the Year, Mrs. Jennifer Lederman.

HASA Update

HASA President, Katie Devitt welcomed everyone again to the meeting and thanked everyone for joining the February HASA meeting.

- HASA will be meeting with Mr. Occhino in the coming weeks regarding allocations for the 2024-2025 school year.
- HASA is looking for volunteers to fill the following open volunteer roles:
 - The graduation ticket raffle this spring
 - Membership chair starting in April 2024
 - Secondary Vice President on the HASA board for the 2024-2025 school year
- Please reach out to any HASA Board Member if you have interest in volunteering for one of these roles.
- If you have any submissions for the HASA’s monthly newsletter please refer to these [guidelines](#) prior to submitting your article(s).
- Please submit articles via a separate email and mention the month it is being submitting for when sending in the submissions. Articles should be sent in MS Word format only and include current links, forms, photographs (JPG or PNG files).
- For questions regarding the HASA Newsletter or for submission of articles, please email Shanta Kaikini at shantalakaikini@yahoo.co.uk.
- You can view HASA’s newsletter [here](#).
- Please follow HASA on [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#).
- To join HASA, visit HASA’s [membership page](#) or scan the QR code below. You can join HASA at that time. Membership is \$40.00. Your dues will give you access to the school directory and the money goes to support all of HASA’s initiatives.



HASA Recording Secretary, Patrice Duker asked for primary and secondary motions to

approve the January 10, 2024 meeting minutes. Katie Devitt motioned for approval and Anne Kay seconded the motion.

HASA Treasurer, Margaret Murphy, reported that as of February 7, 2024, HASA's Operating Account balance is \$25,440.68 and the Money Market balance is \$59,111.46 for a total of \$84,552.14.

Music and Performing Arts Association (MPAA) Update

Julie de Jesus reported:

- The spring play, "[Mamma Mia](#)," will take place February 29, 2024 through March 3, 2024. Tickets are now on sale for the performances and can be ordered [here](#). Tickets will also be available at the door 45 minutes before the start of each performance.
- On March 7, 2024, MPAA will host its annual BINGO Night, which is their largest fundraiser of the year. [Click here](#) for more information and tickets.
- The Northern Highlands Acapella group has their next competition on March 23, 2024.
- MPAA is looking for additional board members for the 2023-2024 school year. Anyone interested in finding out more about these roles can contact Tiffany Hogue.
- MPAA membership for the 2023-2024 is open. [Visit here](#) for more information on MPAA.
- MPAA meetings are held on a monthly basis at 7:00 pm at Northern Highlands High School in the Teacher's cafeteria. The next MPAA meeting will be Tuesday, March 6, 2024.

HASA President, Katie Devitt, thanked everyone for attending and reiterated the board's appreciation for all the support through the year. HASA's next monthly Zoom meeting will be on Wednesday, March 13, 2024 at 1:00 pm to accommodate the delayed opening for students due to state testing. Katie adjourned the meeting at 9:42 am.