



Minutes of the General Meeting  
Wednesday, November 8, 2023

**In Attendance:**

Katie Devitt, Anne Kay, Patrice Duker, Margaret Murphy, Lisa Mundy, Maggie Liljegren, Christine Ferrarie, Lorraine Reichert, Renee Lardieri, Susie Fein, Grace Perruzzi, Thao Groenewald, Lynelle Tedesco, Janeen Skripak, Christi Yu, Medy Murphy, Bob Males, Barbara Lobo, Anita Altinbas, Julie De Jesus-Evans, Kimberly Ripps-Weiner, Sonia Chadha Agarwal, Yunha Bang, Maja Roewe, M. Costakis, Deirdre Dunne, Jean Him, Kate Arnold, Elise Aronson, Lisa Comninellis

**School Administration in Attendance:**

Dr. Scot Beckerman, Mr. Joseph Occhino, Ms. Christine Wegert, Dr. Jessica Verdicchio

HASA President, Katie Devitt, welcomed and thanked everyone for joining the call. She called the meeting to order at 9:01 am.

**Superintendent's Update – Dr. Scot Beckerman**

Dr. Beckerman provided the following updates:

- The overall construction of the field house remains on schedule for a March 2024 completion. The construction company is looking to put in all the windows and close up the building for the winter by the end of next week (November 17, 2023). Once the building is closed up, work will begin on the interior pending an issue the district is having with the installation of the electrical pole from PSE&G.
- The new entrance to the football field is almost complete. The construction company is finalizing the caps on the entrance gates and the district is waiting to hear when they will be installed.
- The turf field project is ahead of schedule and is now looking at a late February completion date, pending what happens with the upcoming winter.
- The rest of the interior projects included in the referendum – the library, turning the old fitness center into classrooms, the art rooms, the television production rooms, and the media center are all projected to go out to bid via RFPs in November 2023. The district is hoping to have all projects completed and updated for the 2024-2025 school year.
- Dr. Beckerman thanked Mr. Occhino and Ms. Hayes for the presentation they made at the New Jersey School Board Convention on the district's Option 2 program (The Career and Academic Pathways program). As a result of the presentation, the district has received numerous inquiries from other school districts who are interested in learning more about the implementation of the program.

- He also thanked all the school board members who attended the New Jersey School Board Convention as the district had representation from all four towns (Allendale, Ho-Ho-Kus, Saddle River and Upper Saddle River) at the convention.
- The 2024-2025 school calendar is on the School Board agenda for Monday, November 13, 2023. Once approved it will be distributed to district families. One item to note is that there will be four-day break during the Columbus Day weekend in 2024 to accommodate a K-12 articulation.

### **Principal's Update – Mr. Joseph Occhino**

Mr. Occhino provided the following updates and information:

- Information was provided to parents earlier in the month regarding students purchasing food in the cafeteria and charging it to other student accounts. To prevent this from happening moving forward, the school will now require students to show their physical student ID or a digital copy of their student ID to purchase food in the cafeteria. To download a digital copy of one's student ID please:
  - Log into the Genesis parent portal.
  - Go to documents.
  - Upload the ID photo or to take a screenshot of the ID on your student's phone.
- He also encouraged parents to check their Pay School account to review recent purchases to ensure the changes on their student's account are correct.
- Information related to the Governor's Educator of the Year program was distributed to Northern Highlands families and Mr. Occhino asked that parents nominate any Northern Highlands teacher that they think is deserving of this award. Click here to view the [communication here](#) and the [criteria here](#). Deadline to nominate a teacher is Thursday, November 16, 2023.
- He noted that the fall production, "A Mid-Summer Night's Dream" will be performed November 16-18, 2023 at 7:00 pm.
- He also noted that Northern Highlands' fall athletic season has been outstanding with numerous teams advancing in the State sectional tournament, namely:
  - Girls soccer won the state sectional final for group 3 North against Ramapo.
  - Girls volleyball won their sectional final against Morris Knolls.
  - Girls cross country won their sectional championship.
  - Football will be competing for their sectional title on Friday, November 10, 2023 against Ramapo.

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

Ms. Wegert provided the following updates:

- School Counseling events scheduled for November include:
  - November 9, 2023 – The School Counseling Department will host a presentation in conjunction with The Princeton Review on "[Everything You Wanted to Know About The College Admission Process But Were Too Afraid to Ask](#)" at 7:00 pm.

- She also noted that all recent webinars are available for viewing through the School Counseling's website including:
  - [CIEE Travel Abroad](#). Password to view the webinar is epn.RK5r
  - [NCAA Eligibility for Future College Athletes](#). Password to view the webinar is sU=b1A%4
  - [Private Prep College Admission Testing Landscape](#)
- On December 15, 2023, the School Counseling Department will be running an elective exploration program for ninth through eleventh grade students. Students will have an opportunity to choose three electives that they would like to learn more about and potentially take in the 2024-2025 school year. More information will be provided to parents next week.
- To view the November edition of the School Counseling Department's newsletter [click here](#).

**Wellness Department Update – Dr. Jessica Verdicchio, Supervisor of Wellness & Equity**  
Dr. Verdicchio provided the following information:

- The Wellness Department will once again be hosting a number of program through the [Northern Highlands Parent Academy & Speakers Series](#) (NHPASS) throughout the 2023-2024 school year and hosted its first two programs:
  - On October 25, 2023 with The Black Poster. The program featured an impactful presentation and a galley display illustrating the impact of addiction and overdose in the community.
  - On November 1, 2023 with the webinar, *Social Media's Influence on Self-Esteem*. The featured speaker was Sara Martino, Ph.D., LPC, NCC. Dr. Martino presented her research on social media's impact on teens.
- Upcoming NHPASS programs include:
  - January 24, 2024 – There will be a presentation on *College & Mental Health* and will feature Barbros Dinler, LPC, LCADC and Julia Tsakalis, LCSW who will share strategies for parents to support their teen's mental health and resiliency. This presentation will be held at 7:00 pm via Zoom. [Click here to register](#).
  - March 6, 2024 – There will be a presentation on *Achieving Goals Through Adversity* featuring Aaron Golub, the first legally blind athlete to play D1 Football, will share how he turned adversity into achievement. [Click here to register](#).

**Board of Education Update – Maggie Liljegren**

Maggie Liljegren provided the following:

- At the October 16, 2023 Board of Education meeting, the Board welcomed Melissa Duncan.
- She offered her and the Board's congratulations to the following individuals on their election and re-election to the Board of Education:
  - Natalie Capano – Newly Elected
  - Dr. Andrew Prince – Re-elected
  - Rachel Millston - Re-election

- She noted that members of the Board Education attended the School Board Conference in Atlantic City, NJ from October 22-26, 2023.
- The next Board of Education meeting is on Monday, November 13, 2023 at 7:00 pm in the library at Northern Highlands.

### **HASA Update**

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

- HASA has been busy getting ready for the Holiday Raffle which is on December 7, 2023 at Northern Highlands. A special thank you to Anne Kay and Barbara Lobo for chairing the Holiday Raffle this year.
- Thank you to Kathy Travers and Thao Groenewald for heading up the new entrance gate project being installed at the football stadium and working with the construction company, as HASA provided funding for this project.
- 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.



- 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 Shantal Kaikini at [shantalakaikini@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:shantalakaikini@yahoo.co.uk).
- Please follow HASA on [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#).

### **Holiday Raffle Update**

- HASA Vice President, Anne Kay, provided the following updates related to HASA's Holiday Raffle:
  - HASA will be hosting its Holiday Raffle in-person again this year.
  - The Holiday Raffle is HASA's largest fundraiser for the year and will take place on Thursday, December 7, 2023 from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm in the Cultural Arts Room at Northern Highlands High School and is being co-chaired by Anne Kay and Barbara Lobo. The event will feature a luncheon and is free to attend.
  - Grand prize raffle prizes this year include:
    - De'Longhi Eletta Explore Espresso Machine (value \$1800)
    - Gucci Marmont mini shoulder bag (value \$1550)

- iPad Air 2023 (value \$850)
- Hermes Clic Clac H bracelet (value \$740)
- A trio of fine dining gift cards (value \$600)
- Information related to the grand prize raffle prizes and tickets to enter the raffle was mailed to Northern Highlands families in early November. Raffle tickets need to be returned to Christina Jasko by December 4, 2023. A returned envelope with Christina's address was included in the mailing.
- In addition to the grand prize raffle prizes, there will be a junior parking spot raffle. The raffle is open to current sophomores and junior families. A message with more information on the junior parking space raffle will be sent to Northern Highlands families shortly.
- The committee is still seeking sponsors for the Holiday Raffle. [Click here](#) for sponsorship information.
- The committee is also still seeking tricky tray donations and baskets for the Holiday Raffle.
- Anyone who would like to be a sponsor, donate, or has any questions related to the Holiday Raffle should contact [HASAHolidayRaffle@gmail.com](mailto:HASAHolidayRaffle@gmail.com).

HASA Recording Secretary, Patrice Duker asked for primary and secondary motions to approve the October 11, 2023 meeting minutes. Anne Kay motioned for approval and Katie Devitt seconded the motion.

HASA Treasurer, Margaret Murphy, reported that as of November 8, 2023, HASA's Operating Account balance is \$49,857.62 and the Money Market balance is \$58,873.93.

### **Music and Performing Arts Association (MPAA) Update**

Medy Murphy reported:

- Tickets for the fall play, "A Mid-Summer Night's Dream" are on sale now. The performances will be on November 16-18, 2023 at 7:00 pm. To purchase tickets [click here](#).
- Auditions for the spring play, "Mamma Mia," will take place from November 26, 2023 through December 1, 2023.
- The Winter Chorus concert will take place on December 6, 2023.
- The Winter Band concert will take place on December 7, 2023
- 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, December 5, 2023.

HASA President, Katie Devitt, thanked everyone for attending and reiterated the board's appreciation for all the support through the year. HASA will not be holding a Zoom meeting in December. Instead, HASA will be hosting its annual Holiday Raffle on Thursday, December 7, 2023 from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm in the Cultural Arts Room at Northern Highlands High School. The in-person event is free, and all are welcome to attend. HASA's next monthly Zoom

meeting will be on Wednesday, January 10, 2024 at 9:00 am. Katie adjourned the meeting at 9:35 am.