



Minutes of the General Meeting  
Wednesday, September 20, 2023

**In Attendance:**

Katie Devitt, Anne Kay, Patrice Duker, Margaret Murphy, Lisa Mundy, Christine Ferrarie, Lorraine Reichert, Jennifer Moodie, Renee Lardieri, Rachel Shamash, Kimberly Ripps-Weiner, Tiffany Hogue, Shantala Kaikini, Gidget Phillips, Alexandra Singer, Deirdre Dunne, Susie Fein, Kathy Glynn, Lisa Ellison, Grace Perruzzi, Thao Groenewald, Sonia Agarwal, Lynelle Tedesco, Susan Esserman, Janeen Skripak, Christi Yu, Medy Murphy, Bob Males, Carrie Gabriel, Amy Kim, Anna Maria Pochatko, Lisa Holovach, Gadi Piran, Jennifer Henry, Jann Reissman. Lisa Mundy, Yunha Bank

**School Administration in Attendance:**

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

HASA President, Katie Devitt, welcomed and thanked everyone for joining HASA's first call for the 2023-2024 school year. She also thanked the administration for attending the Welcome Breakfast on Friday, September 15, 2023, as well as all the parents who attended. She called the meeting to order at 9:01 am.

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

Dr. Beckerman provided the following updates:

- The school year is off to a great start, and he thanked the administration, parents, students, and HASA for their continued support.
- Ms. Kimberly Hayes and Mr. Joseph Occhino will be presenting at the state-wide school board meeting in Atlantic City in October on the how the district developed its Option Two program and the overall success of the program.
- On the referendum:
  - The field house is on track to be completed by March 2024.
  - The construction of the new turf fields are set to break ground on Monday, October 2, 2023. The district is looking to complete the turf field project by Spring 2024.
  - Due to the construction of the turf fields, the school will be losing 50 to 60 senior parking spots which are needed to stage the materials for the turf fields. This is in addition to the 50 to 60 other parking spots lost due to the field house construction at the back of the school. As a result, parking at the school will be extremely tight from October through March 2024. Mr. Occhino has been working with the Borough of Allendale on additional street parking access and is awaiting on the approval from the Allendale Town Council.

- For the planetarium project, the district has gone to bid for the projector and hopes to finalize and install the new projector by the Spring of 2024.
- The rest of the projects included in the referendum – the library, the fitness center and art rooms – are all projected to go out to bid via RFPs in November 2023. The district is hoping to start work on all of these projects by May 2024 and have the projects completed by the start of the 2024-2025 school year.

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

Mr. Occhino reiterated that the start of the school year has been fantastic. He provided the following updates:

- This year's Summer Academy program, which has been in existence for the past three years, was the most successful it has ever been and achieved the milestone of 100 student participating. Applications for the 2024 Summer Academy program will be available in December 2023.
- Academic Integrity Week was held September 18-22, 2023. Academic integrity, academic responsibility, and student accountability have always been very important to the Northern Highlands Regional High School District, and the staff discussed with students how new teaching methodologies, new technologies, and increased focus on student collaboration can affect academic integrity standards and expectations. The Academic Integrity Policy, which outlines the school's expectations, can be found in the [Student Parent Handbook](#) (Appendix B, page 28).
- NJSLA reports will be sent home shortly. These reports reflect the results of the NJSLA exams that students in ELA 9, Algebra 1, Geometry, and Science, took last spring.

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

Ms. Wegert provided the following updates:

- The school counseling department kicked off the school year with a highly successful College Fair featuring 100 representatives from colleges and universities, trade schools and military service branches.
- The school counselors have been busy meeting with seniors to review the timeline and their responsibilities in notifying their counselors on the colleges and universities they are applying for and the associated application deadlines for each college and university.
- School Counseling events scheduled for the fall include:
  - Financial Aid Night on September 27, 2023 at 7:00 pm. – This event will highlight the numerous changes related to the FAFSA application and provide guidance into the deadline associated with applying for FAFSA, which is now December. To receive a copy of the presentation, contact Ms. Christine Wegert at [wegertc@northernhighlands.org](mailto:wegertc@northernhighlands.org).
  - October 5, 2023 – There will be a webinar on *College Admissions and the Testing Landscape* at 7:00 pm. The webinar is being hosted by Private Prep.

- October 12, 2023 – There will be a webinar on *NCAA Eligibility* at 7:00 pm. The webinar is presented by the NCAA Eligibility Center and is a great program to attend for any future collegiate athlete and their family.
- October 19, 2023 – The School Counseling Department, along with the Northern Highlands Boomerang Project, will host the 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Family Night from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm in the auditorium at Northern Highlands High School.
- To view the September edition of the School Counseling Department's newsletter [click here.](#)
- To view the October edition of the School Counseling Department's newsletter [click here.](#)
- School counselors will also be meeting with all freshmen in October to check in to see how the transition to high school is going and to remind them to get involved with the many activities and clubs available at Northern Highlands.

### **Student Athletic Update – Mr. Michael Koth, Assistant Principal of Athletics**

Mr. Koth provided the following fall sport team updates:

- Football is off to a strong start and is 3-1.
- Girls soccer is coming off a big win against Ramapo in double overtime and is 3-1.
- Boys soccer is off to a slow start and is 1-3.
- Girls volleyball is undefeated. Anna Bryan Jones is up for the player of week.
- Field hockey just started playing due to weather related issues. They are off to a 3-0 start.
- Cross Country had its first meet early in the month and is looking forward to the Garrett Mountain and Shore Coaches Invitationals in the coming weeks.
- Girls tennis has also been subject to weather delays and is 1-1 thus far for the season.
- The Athletic Department is continuing to partner with the Positive Coaching Alliance this year. The program provides an opportunity to build leadership skills with student athletes. The first workshop for the 2023-2024 school year will be held on September 28, 2023.
- Winter sport sign-ups will be held on October 11, 2023.

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

Dr. Verdicchio also noted it has been a busy start to the school year for the Wellness & Equity Department. She provided the following updates:

- Wellness counselors have been visiting classrooms and sharing information on the Wellness Center and programs offered through it.
- 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 starting on October 25, 2023 at 6:30 pm with The Black Poster Project in the Northern Highlands Main Gym. This program will feature an impactful presentation and galley display of that illustrates the impact of addiction and overdose in the community.
- November 1, 2023 – NHPASS will host *Social Media's Influence on Self-Esteem* at 7:00 pm via Zoom. The feature speaker will be Sara Martino, Ph.D., LPC, NCC. Dr. Martino will present her research on social media's impact on teens.
- 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.

- March 6, 2024 – NHPASS will host Aaron Golub, the first legally blind athlete to play D1 football. Aaron will share how he turned adversity into achievement through his presentation entitled *Achieving Goals Through Adversity*. This presentation will be hosted on Zoom at 7:00 pm.
- For more information on these programs, [click here](#).
- The Wellness Department is also partnering with Care Solace to support the health, safety, and well-being of Northern Highland students and their families. If you or a family member are looking for help with mental health or substance use, Care Solace can help you quickly find treatment options matched to your needs regardless of the circumstance. Care Solace is a free and confidential service provided to students, staff, and their families by Northern Highlands Regional High School District. The Care Solace's team is available 24/7/365 and can provide support in any language. They can be reached at 888-515-0595.
- For more information on Care Solace visit their website [here](#) or view their flyer [here](#).

### **Board of Education Update – Christine Ferrarie**

Christine Ferrarie welcomed everyone and thanked HASA for their support throughout the year. She noted the following:

- The Board of Education appointed Suzanne Warzala on September 5, 2023 as a Board of Education trustee. Suzanne, an Allendale resident, replaced an opening which was vacated by Tyler Kearl, who moved out of the district at the end of June 2023.
- At the September 18, 2023 Board of Education meeting, there were two special presentations made to the board:
  - AP Score Trends: 2019 – 2023 from Mr. Joseph Occhino. View the presentation [here](#).
  - New Jersey State Testing Report: Performance and Participation Results from Dr. Robin Knutelsky. View the presentation [here](#).
- The next Board of Education meeting is on Monday, October 16, 2023.

### **HASA Update**

HASA President, Katie Devitt welcomed everyone to the new school year and thanked everyone for joining the September HASA meeting.

- Katie thanked everyone who attended the Welcome Breakfast on Friday, September 15, 2023 as it was a great way to meet the administration and learn more about the parent associations at Northern Highlands. Thank you to Karina Ferrales for chairing the Welcome Breakfast.
- The winner of the junior parking spot raffle was drawn at the Welcome Breakfast. Congratulations to Jake Gartman who won the spot and thank you to Janeen Skripak for heading up the junior parking spot raffle and for overseeing HASA's [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#) pages.

- HASA is also looking for a volunteer to join the HASA Board as a second Vice President. If anyone is interested in learning more about HASA and getting involved with the organization and school, please reach out to [Katie Devitt](#). This position will be required to attend monthly meetings and take on some duties for HASA throughout the year.
- Articles/submissions for the HASA's October newsletter are due by October 11, 2023 with an expected publication date of October 30, 2023. 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).
- HASA membership for the 2023-2024 school year is open. 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. Thank you to Ali White for heading up HASA's membership initiative for 2023-2024



- By joining HASA, you will have access to DirectorySpot, which is HASA's student directory. It is an opt-in and password protected directory and includes student names along with the name and contact information of the primary guardian as reported in Genesis. If you have any student or contact data changes throughout the year, please contact the school to update your information in the Genesis Student Information System.
- The 2023-2024 directory has been published and is available through the DirectorySpot app.
- If you were a DirectorySpot user last year, then you only need to log in using your same username and password to see the current academic year's student data. If you are a NEW user, you have been set up with a DirectorySpot account and can download the app for free from the App Store (iPhone users) or Google Play (Android users). Access to the student data is also available from the web.
- **For Smartphone or Tablet Users:**
  - Download the DirectorySpot app by going to the app store and searching "DirectorySpot" or by clicking on the appropriate link here:
    - iOS - <http://goo.gl/5U2Tzq> or
    - Android - <http://goo.gl/iBK9IY>
  - Launch DirectorySpot, enter your Guardian 1 email address as your Username, then click on "Reset Password"

- An email will be sent to your inbox with a link to set your password. Click on the link in this email to set your password, then relaunch the DirectorySpot app and login with your username and password.
- **For Tablet, Mac, or PC Users:**
  - Go to [directoryspot.net](https://directoryspot.net) and click on "Login" in the upper right-hand corner.
  - Enter your Guardian 1 email address as your Username, then click on "Reset Password"
  - An email will be sent to your inbox with a link to set your password. Click on the link in this email to set your password and login.
- Please note that the email invitation to set up a new account expires within 7 days of receipt, but the instructions and the hyperlink in the same email to route you to the student database even after the 7-day period are still applicable. Just select "reset password" on the log in page and enter the Guardian 1 email address in the "Username" prompt. This action will generate another email invitation granting a \*new\* 7-day window to establish an account.

HASA Vice President, Anne Kay, announced that 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. The event will feature a luncheon and is free to attend. More information will be shared in the coming weeks.

HASA Recording Secretary, Patrice Duker asked for primary and secondary motions to approve the June 7, 2023 meeting minutes. Anne Kay motioned for approval and Thao Groenewald seconded the motion.

HASA Treasurer, Margaret Murphy, reported that as of September 20, 2023, HASA's Operating Account balance is \$40,398.00 and the Money Market balance is \$58,717.00.

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

Tiffany Hogue reported:

- The fall play, "A Mid-summer Night Dream" has been cast and performances will be on November 16-18, 2023.
- A Cappella auditions will be hosted during the week of September 18, 2023.
- MPAA will be hosting a Marching Band Festival at Northern Highlands High School on October 14, 2023. All are welcome to attend.
- MPAA is also 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 now 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, October 3, 2023.

HASA President, Katie Devitt, thanked everyone for attending and reiterated the board's appreciation for all the support through the year. HASA is truly a community effort, and everyone makes a difference, whether it is big or small, to make HASA successful. The next HASA meeting will be on Wednesday, October 11, 2023 at 9:00 am via Zoom. She adjourned the meeting at 9:52 am.