

Freedom High School PTO Meeting Minutes

January 17, 2023

Wendy Simpson, PTO President:

- Welcome and thank you for coming tonight
- November Meeting Minutes are not up on the website yet; approval for this will be at the next meeting.

Treasurer's Report: Jessica Kalavoda

- Beginning and Ending balance is \$3,754.54
- We are waiting on some deposits from the recent fundraising. Motion to approve – 1st Kathleen Sweeney, 2nd Kelly Burkhart.

Principal's Report: Laurie Sage

- Winter sports are about halfway thru; senior nights are coming up
- Start of Girls Wrestling
- Senior basketball player Nick Ellis reached a total of 1,000 points scored
- 4 new members were inducted into the Athletic Hall of Fame
- Band and choir concerts were held in December, which was preceded by the Art Show. This night of the arts was successful, and we plan to do the same in the Spring.
- Football players Kyle and Owen Johnson signed with Harvard University
- Congratulations to Jerry Rivera for his Questbridge Scholarship; a celebration will be held in his honor on January 25.
- The completion and opening of the new Wellness Center (formerly the Planetarium) is almost here.
- FHS finished Keystone testing; Finals will take place Friday 1/20 for Blocks 1 & 2 and on Monday, 1/23 for Blocks 3 & 4. 1/24 will be finals make up day. The first day of the second semester begins on Wednesday, 1/25.
- VoTech will hold the Skills USA competition on 1/25 at Parkland H.S.
- Feb. 14 we will host the Special Olympics Basketball game
- Feb. 15 is Open House for the second semester
- Feb. 17th & 20th are days off for students.
- Winter/Indoor Track and Field new this year

Ms. Sage spoke of the recent incident and arrest involving a teacher at Freedom. On 1/4/23 she was made aware and immediately notified the police department and Dr. Roy. This teacher was placed on a leave of absence the same day. Our focus at Freedom has been to support the victim, students, and team members.

Q. Where should students go if they feel the need to talk to someone?

A. Students should meet with their guidance counselor. The guidance counselor will assess the needs of students, whether it be weekly check-ins or more in-depth mental health services.

Tracy Hirner, BASD Supervisor of Social/Emotional Health Services:

-Applauds students for the maturity they've shown in regard to this matter. Counseling staff has reported they are not too overwhelmed with student needs at this time. Students report they feel very supported by the FHS staff.

Q: Is there a procedure in place to report similar incidents?

A: Yes, Student Services/Counselors. Also, the Safe2Say app, is a 24/7 service.

Special Guest: Nate Stannard, Athletic Director:

-Currently have 23 PIAA sports.

-Approximately 500 student-athletes at FHS

-Football team was the District Runner-Up this year. In 6 out of the last 7 years, the football team has been in the District Championship.

-Cheerleaders with Coach Semrau are headed to the PIAA championship.

-Runners Dylan Boyle and Ava Fihlman – named to the EPC all-star cross-country team.

-Krish Patel was named to EPC all-star golf team

-Winter basketball game against Liberty brought a win and was where we had inductees to the Athletic Hall of Fame. Jazz band performed there as well.

-Rifle team had a win against Liberty and Southern Lehigh

-Girls Wrestling, coached by M. Laubach, has 14 members; will keep growing and is close to becoming part of PIAA

-Indoor track and field is new this year.

-Spring sports start March 6; Free St. Luke's Physicals will be either 2/22 or 2/23 (TBD)

-Signing for athletes will be May 5th

-Sports Banquet is May 24th at 6pm at FHS

Special Guest: Coach Shuler, AthLife:

-PATH is a partnership with AthLife, ST. Luke's, and BASD whose goal is to provide academic support to athletes with the help of 4 academic and athletic coaches who meet with the student's coach, parents, and teachers. It was first piloted with the football team and has added Basketball and Lacrosse. It has had great success.

-Coach Shuler thanks everyone for the support and the opportunity to speak here tonight.

Q: Does a student-athlete need to be in one of the mentioned sports to take part in PATH?

A: No, any student-athlete can reach out and they will make contact with them.

-Coach Shuler was thankful for the donation of snacks for PATH which had been donated by the Field Hockey Team. They were much appreciated for their after-school meetings. Mrs. Simpson is hoping to have the PTO work on more donations.

Q: Do students need to have played a sport prior to being eligible for the high school team?

A: Experience helps, especially at the Varsity level. It depends on the sport as to whether there are try-outs/cuts or if the team accepts everyone.

Special Guest: Ms. Kavacky, teacher, Student Council advisor, and Dance Team:

-Spoke about her work in Student Council along with C. Salter.

-Student Council highlights include: Homecoming planning, class reunion tours, caroling at nursing homes, reading to K & 1st grade at Governor Wolf, Special Olympics, Open House, 8th Grade night, food pantry (Backpack Pals), park clean-ups, teacher appreciation planning, planning Powder Puff for April.

Ms. Kavacky encourages everyone to get involved – not only for the officers.

Ms. Kavacky also talked about the Dance Team, who performed at the Pep Rally, basketball games, and at competitions.

Q. Would it be a good idea for Student Council to be in touch with BASD Proud Parents, who are a local public school advocacy group.

A: (Ms. Sage): Yes, and I had a conversation with Mr. Vennemann at BASD Proud Parents about this and we discussed ways to get the student council involved.

Special Guest: Ms. Elliot, ASL Teacher and Club advisor:

-No sign language skills needed to be a part of the club. We have fun, play games, and fundraise. Some of our fundraisers include selling bracelets, and t-shirts, dine to donate nights. We donate to the Deaf and Blind Association and to Melissa's fund -which is an organization geared to promote access to interpreters for the deaf.

-Our students also signed the National Anthem at the Freedom/Liberty game.

-We have "Pen Pals" at the middle schools that we communicate with via Zoom.

-We volunteer over the summer at the library.

-Ms. Elliot is hoping to raise enough money to take the students on a field trip to the Deaf School – the only Deaf College in the world.

-Club meets on Mondays in Room 133

Special Guest: Mrs. McMichaels, Counselor:

Q. Can you speak about how important clubs and activities are for our students?

A. Yes, there are many benefits, including making a big school seem smaller, good to have on college applications, and also from the social and emotional standpoint- it is invaluable.

Q: Will there be an Activities Fair this year?

A: Yes, April 17th for rising 9th graders. This is a place where students can see what activities and clubs are here, sign up with their email, and someone will reach out to them to share information about meetings.

Q: A concern about students riding bikes recklessly after school (i.e. standing on handlebars) on Chester Avenue and whether or not an announcement can be made regarding safe practices.

A: Ms. Sage said she will speak to the SRO who helps with the bus channel and could look into possibly having an officer around after school to monitor this dangerous situation.

Wendy Simpson brought up the good response to the extra signage on school property.

Wendy also thanked the guest speakers for their time tonight.

PAC Report: Jessica Hancz

-Justin Amann, Executive Director of The Foundation spoke about the Celebration Dinner at Wind Creek Convention Center on March 21st to celebrate 24 years of supporting students in the BASD. We will need volunteers.

-Sports Medicine trained Athletic Directors on CPR and the use of AEDs.

-Sports Physicals may include a cardiac referral if deemed necessary.

-AEDs are inspected monthly at every school.

-Any Given Child Bethlehem is a pilot program that promotes creative learning strategies for the arts in K-8.

-BASD Proud Parents is trying to get more student involvement. This includes a trip to Harrisburg scheduled in April. Meetings are on the 1st Wednesday of the month. Sign up for emails on their website and follow on Twitter and Facebook.

-Fountain Hill Elementary School needs to be demolished and rebuilt. We are still years away from that project. Hanover, Buchanan, and Miller Heights need new HVAC systems in order to get up to code.

-Wendy encourages everyone to spread the word about PAC. If there is a matter that is of concern to you, bring it to your school's PAC representative and they will bring your concerns to the monthly PAC meetings, which are attended by Dr. Roy and Dr. Silva, and others.

New Business:

-Will do another Little Caesars Pizza fundraiser.

The next FHSPTO meeting is on *March 14, 2023*

Meeting adjourned