

Town Meeting

3-19-15

TOWN MEETING

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Precursors - none

Announcements

- The YULA (Frisbee) Invite will take place March 21 - 22 at Long Bridge Park and Bluemont. Over 36 teams from as far away as Wisconsin will be coming to play more than 100 games. Come out and support HB!
- Cabaret will take place this Friday night at 7pm.

Consent Items - none

Motions

- Frank brought a motion to accept four students as representatives for the principal hiring committee. He said that seven students had given their names to Vanessa, and that he had eliminated Bennett's (12th) name as he was a senior. He then choose Marie Johnson, a junior, Fernando Rocha, a sophomore, Katy Moore, an 8th grader, and he randomly picked one 7th grader out of three: Makyla Loeffel.
 - o Eliza (11th) asked what day the committee was meeting and if it conflicted with the music trip.
 - o Frank said it was going to meet on April 8 - the day before the trip.
 - o Paul said he was a little uncomfortable with Bennett's name being eliminated. Bennett answered that although his heart was broken, he was fine with the decision.
 - o Amanda (12th) said she hadn't heard about a request for student volunteers and said that since she always attends Town Meeting and pays attention to what is going on, if she didn't know, probably many others didn't, either.
 - o Frank said it had been announced at Town Meeting and that he had sent an email to teachers asking them to mention it in class.
 - o Frank then said he would table the motion until next week to allow more students to know of the option. Anyone interested should give his or her name to Vanessa.
 - o Olivia asked if seniors should refrain from volunteering, and Frank said he thought that would be right.
 - o Dave Soles said he disagreed with that decision, saying that seniors have the best understanding of what it is to be an HB student and could be "good stewards of our program."
 - o Eliza said she thought sophomores and juniors had just as good an understanding as seniors and that it was a good idea to keep them off the committee.
 - o Motion was tabled until next week.

Discussions

- Casey spoke about the decision made in December to increase HB's student population by 10%. HB administrators had hoped to put off the increase until after the upcoming move; the school board recently informed them that they wanted the increase implemented immediately. The administrators fought for a compromise, and they all agreed to phase it in over three years. Casey put up a graph that Graham had designed showing how students would be added to each class, saying that ultimately, middle school grades would increase from 69 to 75 and high school grades from 79 to 87. She said that allocation would increase commensurately with student number increases.
 - o Amanda (12th) asked if the Asperger's program contributed to those totals, and Casey said no.
 - o Dan asked how, if waiting lists were kept by elementary school, would students be added. Casey explained that there are two lists: a county wide list and a school by school list and they are integrated to form one waiting list.
 - o Rebekka (7th) said she thought it would be good to take names from further away elementary schools, like the one she had come from, but Casey answered that we have to use the system set up by the lottery.

- o Bennett asked if the senior class would be increased. Casey said no.
- o Rachel (6th) questioned what the exact numbers would be, and Casey said that now they are 523 and at the end of three years they will be 573 (lottery accepted students).
- o Dave said that kids that enter after 6th grade are more likely to have chosen HB for what HB is, and that it might therefore be better to increase upper grades proportionately more than 6th grade.
- o Casey replied that the administrators had tried to persuade the school board that increasing the high school more than the middle school was the best plan, but that the school board is determined to show that HB is assisting to ease the middle school over-enrollment problem.
- o Graham answered a question about lottery numbers: this year there were 454 applicants for 69 middle school slots and 151 applicants for 10 high school slots.
- o Nana (11th) said that as long as they're forcing us to accept these increases, we might as well do so with a good attitude and make the best of it.
- o Frank reiterated that the school board had tried to implement an immediate 10% increase and that he thought Casey and Graham should get the credit they deserve for achieving a more gradual increase.
- o Dan (12th) asked about how allocations would change, and Casey answered that the board had originally budgeted for increased allocations covering an immediate 10% increase, but that now, that too would be added gradually. With 18 additional students in the fall we should get approximately .75 new teachers.
- o Paul said that it would be ideal sometime in the future to start HB in 7th grade after kids had spent at least one year in their home middle schools.
- o Dave said that the discussion was pertinent to Bennett's ongoing analysis of HB's culture. He said we are accepting the school board's decisions without a fierce battle.
- o Amanda (12th) said that students have spent the last year fighting for HB.
- o Margaret (12th) agreed, saying we have fought hard and done all that can be done.
- o Paul said Amanda and Margaret were right. Where we are now as opposed to what they originally wanted is great, but he still feels that the changes being imposed are bizarre and not at all helpful to HB retaining its unique character. However, we are part of a public school system and therefore hamstrung by the school board's decisions.
- o Ben (11th) said that even with the entire 10% increase, we will still be much smaller than other schools in the district.
- o Meghan said she was worried that we were still on a slippery slope and that this was only the beginning of changes that would be imposed. She added that she didn't trust that allocation increases would keep up with student increases.
- o Frank said that the increased allocations would keep up with student numbers. This is not an arbitrary procedure but a mandated one.
- o Meghan countered that core classes will still increase in size, saying that a .75 teacher won't help.
- o Dan (12th) said he had been in several crowded classes and they weren't great. He worried that there are no guarantees that further increases won't follow.
- o Casey said that we have always found creative and good ways to take full advantage of our allocations. That's how we kept numbers from being used by guidance counselors and created TAs. She conceded that if there ended up being five sections of biology and one AP class, that would indeed necessitate an extra teacher that couldn't be randomly hired for one section. She said that a huge benefit to moving to a new, small building, with no room for trailers, and an expensive area specially designed for Stratford, would be that there would be no room for further expansion in the future.
- o Frank said that it was wrong to assume our model is not respected by the school board and the community at large. A year ago they were still talking of increasing us to 1000 students or eliminating a separate building altogether, but the school board showed in their December decision that they did respect our program and our need to stay moderately small. This decision was due to the tireless work that the HB community did all last year.
- o Paul said he is still frustrated by the board's attitude. When Casey said, "We said this and they said that," it showed that they didn't respect our administrators' amazing understanding and care for this program.
- o Jeff said we need to remember that 52 more students still leaves us a reasonable size. He taught at Williamsburg and Kenmore where there were often 33 kids in a class. He doesn't think people realize that we truly fought hard and won a great victory. We remain and will remain a great program.

- o Ganzorig (12th) said that our increase is a symbolic act that will show the greater Arlington community that we are a part of that community. We've done our part to help address the overpopulation problem.

Motion made and passed to close the speakers list.

- o Tom said that the ongoing discussion had already segued into the tabled discussion from last week, to wit: "How are we acting to maintain the culture of HB when we are under constant threat?" This 10% increase is the result of a lengthy, intensive battle. By pushing back against what they wanted to do, we were in fact acting out the principles of HB and maintaining the protest tradition. He said the PR people from the school board were using the increase only as a publicity stunt.

- o Emma (12th) said the additional 50 student coming to HB will have their lives irrevocably changed, and ultimately, they will add to HB and we will all benefit.

Chair said we were officially transitioning to Bennett's tabled discussion from last week.

- Bennett said that the two discussions were linked, and that especially in light of incorporating new students into the program, we have to be secure in our philosophy and how we want it to evolve.

- o Nana spoke about the committee Bennett is organizing to address the issue and said she thought limiting it to 10 people was a bad idea. She thought that getting a lot of input was beneficial and that maybe ideas should be sought on Google or via a survey.

[Next block started and Margaret made a point of order that neither students nor staff had to leave if Town Meeting was still in progress, but many left.]

- o Discussion continued on the size of the proposed committee. Dan said he thought the number should be decided so that the question of HB culture could be addressed.

- o Paul said it was indicative of the change in HB culture that so many people had chosen to leave the Town Meeting when the block ended rather than stay and continue the discussion.

- o Dave said he thought attendance and attitude towards Town Meeting hadn't changed all that much over the years, and that our overall goal shouldn't be of keeping HB the same but of making it better. He did say that limiting the size of a committee to study the question was very un-HB. Anyone feeling passionate about the question should be able to participate.

- o Amanda said she didn't think the committee should be able to legislate anything but should work together and then come to Town Meeting. She said it will doubtless stay small just by nature of people choosing not to come. Setting a meeting time of 8:20 on a Wednesday, for example, would be a test of who was committed and it would probably end up being a small group.

- o Eliza (11th) said the committee would be a good forum for setting up ideas to present to the architects.

- o Remy (12th) asked how one signed up to be on the committee, and Bennett answered that there were sign-up sheets outside the main office and the library.

- o Bennett said he had been in favor of limiting the size just to prevent unproductive meetings.

- o Tom said he thinks that staff input would be valuable, since many staff members will be here longer than students. He made a formal motion to establish a committee without size limit to consider the culture of HB.

- o Margaret (12th) said she agreed with the motion and that while due to self-selection the committee would probably stay small, anyone who is passionate and shows up can only help.

Motion passed to form a committee and recruit members without any size limit.

Chair: Lizzie Nelson

Co-Chair: Nathaniel Klein

Secretary: Jacob Hall