

Energy Institute High School PTO
February 8, 2018 – General Meeting Minutes

Date, Time, and Location: Thursday, February 8, 2018, 8:30AM, Energy BP Spot

Meeting called to order by Vice President Bendi Saindon at 8:35am

Meeting minutes by Sarah Carpentieri-Asbury, on behalf of Secretary Anne Geddes

Attendance: Copy of sign-in sheet attached

I. Welcome and Vice President's Report: Shelley Nadel was not able to attend this meeting, so Bendi Saindon called the meeting to order and reviewed the minutes of the last meeting.

II. Approval of Minutes: Motion by Jennie Biggs to approve the Nov 8, 2017 General Meeting Minutes, motion carried, minutes approved.

III. Committee Reports

a) Volunteering Updates: There was a general discussion of ways to increase communication to parents from PTO and cohort parents via email and/or text messages. Jennie Biggs described in more detail that each of the two cohorts in the freshman, sophomore, and junior class has a parent volunteer who helps coordinate the needs for chaperones on field trips. The senior class has one cohort parent for the entire class. Discussion that some cohorts are using this method, but in other cohorts (i.e. cohort 2) the teachers have set up a different method of communication with parents.

Volunteer opportunities are still available with Chick-Fil-A sales during lunchtime every Wednesday through the school year. Sign-up on the PTO website.

Also, volunteer opportunities are available to help with our first Spring Auction, to be held on Friday, April 27, 2018. See PTO website for more specific needs and to sign-up.

Contact Jennie Biggs if you would like to volunteer for any PTO positions for the 2018-2019 school year. The plan is to increase PTO Board Meetings for the 2018-2019 academic year to one per month, from the current four per year.

b) Teacher Grants: Jane Shoppell reported on the Teacher Grants and explained that each of the Energy teachers received a \$100 gift card to Home Depot or Office Depot/Office Max in the fall of 2017. These cards were very well received and appreciated by the teachers. This spring, the PTO will again be gifting these cards to the teachers, with the additional choice of a \$100 Amazon card. Jenna Moon will distribute the cards next week.

c) Treasurer's Report: Kathy Kahanek gave the Treasurer's Report. Kathy distributed the profit/loss budget vs actual for the current academic year. She reviewed the finances and explained

that the PTO holds funds for all the clubs at Energy, which the clubs will use for various activities throughout the year (i.e. trips, activities)

There was additional discussion regarding the printer that was leased by the PTO for the students to use. This printer is not working well and needs to be fixed or replaced.

d) Fundraising- Bendi Saindon reported that there was a preview tour of the new school held on a Saturday in January. The tickets for the tour were \$25/per person and the tour was limited to 40 people. Although this tour was successful in raising \$1000, it will be discontinued since concerns were raised about various aspects of the tour (i.e. only offered to a select few people, general appropriateness of a private tour of public facility).

Niki Deltz reported that Chick-fil-A lunch sales on Wednesdays are the biggest fundraiser for Energy. As discussed in previous meetings, there is a need for more fundraisers. To that end, EIHS will hold its first auction, on Friday April 27, 2018 at the Kahanek home. Tickets are \$40 per person and can be purchased online through the PTO website. A small group has been meeting to organize the auction. There will be another meeting on Sunday, Feb 11, 2018 at 4pm at Vinology Wine and Bar Restaurant on Bissonett.

In addition, donations for auction items are needed. The plan is to have a variety of auction items at numerous price points, ranging from themed gift baskets to “big-ticket” items like weekend getaways at a condo in Aspen and another one in Galveston. Donation request forms were distributed and will also be available on the PTO website. Since donations are tax deductible, some companies are requesting the Energy tax id# before making a donation. The Energy tax id# is 47-2000023 and will be included on future donation request forms.

There was also discussion of creating a donation tracking system through google docs on the PTO website so that we can track what items have been donated, what may be needed, and which businesses have been contacted and either donated or declined to donate at this time. Jenna Moon will investigate that option

Discussion also involved general fundraising suggestions, including a spaghetti dinner social, Bingo with a free spaghetti dinner (dinner is free but must purchase each Bingo card to play), jewelry event, and an auction at the school. Suggestions also included establishing 3 or 4 different fundraisers throughout the academic year.

More on fundraising from Administration: Jenna Moon was asked about the Student Council at Energy. There is a Student Council at the school, however, given the number of club activities many students participate in, the Student Council is not as active as it could be. Right now, it operates more in a fund-raising role.

Jenna reported a donation of \$150,000 from Nobel Energy for an artist sculpture at our new location. The current plan is for the artist to design and create one or more “learning” sculpture/s from recyclable aluminum.

Jenna also discussed that there are 20 concrete benches that have been poured in the new site. Consideration is being made to “selling”/adopting the benches for \$1500 each, and then contract with a maker-space to design something the students could adhere to the bench.

A suggestion was made about selling bricks to the new school which could be personalized, but Jenna noted that all the bricks were already in so that wasn't an option. Other suggestions included selling tiles, pavers, and/or fencing, each with some level of personalization.

Our administration is open to suggestions for the campus but would like it to be different from what is seen at other schools. The new Energy Institute campus and buildings are very different from the more traditional school buildings and they would like to maintain that “look” as we consider these options. To that end, Jenna suggested creating a subcommittee to help generate ideas for this type of campus-related fundraising.

e) Marketing and Communications – Kathy Kehn reported that the PTO website is one of the PTO's main marketing tools. In addition, there is a newsletter and call-outs (robo-calls). There was discussion that not everyone is receiving emails or communication from the PTO about upcoming events, and this should be improved. A suggestion was made to consider including information in Spanish as well as English on the PTO website.

f) Spirit Store – Amber Ramirez-Hoffman reported that the PTO has Energy yard signs for sale for \$20. Also, there are a few polos and hoodies still available. See PTO website to purchase any of these items online.

g) Parent Advisory Council – From Jenna Moon, on behalf of Amanda Alexander, please sign in on the Sign-in sheet so that info can be collected for our Title I requirements.

IV. New Business

a) Proposed Bylaws – Bendi Saindon postponed discussion of proposed bylaws until the next meeting. The proposed changes will be posted on the PTO website before the April meeting so that everyone has an opportunity to review them before the meeting.

b) Construction Update and Campus Safety – Principal Lambropoulos reported that the construction on our new school is 90% complete and has gone very smoothly.

Regarding campus safety, there have been some issues related to social media and digital citizenship. All the Energy Institute students signed a “Digital Citizenship” agreement at the beginning of the school year. This agreement outlines the Energy Institute policy regarding online activities and the consequences for violating the policy. Currently, the Deans are actively investigating allegations of inappropriate social media usage while balancing privacy concerns for all involved. Planning is underway for a Digital Citizenship week at Energy Institute in the near future. Principal Lambropoulos also encouraged parents to learn more about cyber security and to know what was happening in their child's “online” world.

Additional discussion centered around cyber security presentations for parents as well as for children.

c) Proposals by HISD to Alter Funding and Modify Magnet Programs – Principal Lambropoulos, Jenna Moon, and Bendi Saindon provided handouts and updated the PTO on the recent proposals by HISD to alter funding and modify magnet programs. Principal Lambropoulos encouraged everyone to follow the developments as reported in the Houston Chronicle, which is regularly reporting on the newest developments. She also stressed that the following information are the proposals from the HISD School Board, but that nothing has been finalized.

***The following summary includes information from the general group discussion and handouts distributed during this PTO meeting. Please see the PTO website for copies of those handouts. Additional information will be posted on the PTO website as it becomes available. ***

In summary, HISD needs to cut \$200 million from the 2018-2019 school budget:

According to HISD, this shortfall is the result of:

- 1) the upcoming state mandated “recapture” payments (Houston must “share our wealth” from property tax proceeds and give those back to the state)
- 2) projected lower student enrollment due to Hurricane Harvey
- 3) projected loss in tax revenue due to property damage from Hurricane Harvey

The proposed major changes include:

1) the closure of 14 underperforming schools

These 14 schools have been identified and HISD has proposed creating “partnerships” with outside organizations at 8 of these schools and the remaining 6 would be closed and immediately reopened with new faculty, staff, and curriculum.

2) changing the magnet program system

HISD is proposing that the district is divided into 4 quadrants, each having a “feeder” pattern from elementary, to middle, to high school. In each quadrant, specific elementary schools will feed into specific middle schools, which will feed into specific high schools.

Under this proposal, educational programs the schools in one quadrant would be “mirrored” in the schools in each quadrant, so that what’s offered in one quadrant is also offered in the other 3 quadrants.

The Feeder Pattern Magnet Programs in each quadrant will include a general well-rounded educational program in elementary school, followed by a themed magnet focus in middle and high school.

HISD will also retain some magnet programs and schools as Unique Magnet Schools (the current thinking is that Energy Institute falls into this category).

3) changing school funding from a PUA model to FTE model

Schools are currently funded under a PUA (per unit allocation) model and HISD wants to shift back to a more centralized FTE (full time equivalent) model. In the PUA model, the money is given to the Principal at each school to spend and the Principal decides how it is spent. In a FTE model, the district determines the spending for each school.

In addition, there are proposed changes to transportation: Currently, the proposal is that students will be eligible for bus transportation if they attend a magnet program within their assigned quadrant. If they attend a Feeder Pattern Magnet Program outside of the quadrant in which they reside, the student will **NOT** be eligible for school bus transportation.

For student attending a HISD Unique Magnet School, students may receive transportation, but secondary students may be offered different modes of transportation (i.e. METRO public transportation) other than a district school bus.

No transportation will be provided to students attending choice programs and choice schools.

This transportation decision could potentially have a huge impact on Energy as 87% of the current students at Energy ride a district school bus to and from school.

The impact of these proposed changes on Energy Institute:

- 1) Loss of 39% of our teachers
- 2) Loss of 50% of administrative staff
- 3) Loss of additional program supports (DiscoverU, One Goal, College programs, field trips, guest speakers, etc.)
- 4) Potential loss of ability to continue cohort model or significant changes to the way our PBL and cohort model are implemented
- 5) Parents will consider alternative school options (private, charter, homeschool) leading to reduced enrollment

Community opposition to new location: Energy Institute will be in a new quadrant once it moves into their new campus. There is opposition to Energy moving into their new location by the residents in the local area. Angel, the Energy Institute school nurse, lives in the community and described some of their concerns. There are already 2 major universities (TSU and UH) in the area and another high school, and residents are concerned about the impact of another high school in their local community.

Discussion around ways to alleviate these concerns included:

- 1) putting Energy Institute school signs in yards showing support for Energy (with the suggestion that the PTO would pay for those signs for residents in the area surrounding the new campus)
- 2) hosting a community open house for local residents to see the facility and meet teachers, faculty, staff, and students
- 3) inviting community leaders to pray over the school

Additional discussion: Administration and PTO parents discussed that Energy Institute is a very diverse school, whose demographics mirror those of HISD. Also, Energy reflects the HISD definition of a “true” magnet program as it pulls students from all over the district. There is a misconception that Energy is supported by Shell, BP, and Conoco, but it **IS** an HISD-funded school, **NOT** a privately funded one. Of the list of magnet school funding, Energy has the smallest budget, yet has done so many things for the students.

What can parents do?

- Stay informed, read the Houston Chronicle and PTO website
- See PTO website for uploaded documents relating to the HISD changes
- Rachel Lowe advised that there are also a couple Facebook sites following the proposed HISD changes (see Rachel for more specific information)
- Call or email your local news media reporters and request that they do a story on these changes (it hasn't been as covered on local news media as in the Houston Chronicle)
- Attend HISD School Board meetings. The next three meetings are scheduled for Feb 8, 2018; Feb 26, 2018; and March 8, 2018
- Call, email, or write to your local HISD representative or School Board member and express your concerns over how these changes will negatively impact Energy Institute.

V. Next General Meeting – Wednesday, April 18, 2018 at 7PM in the BP Spot.

PTO meeting adjourned 10:28am by Bendi Saindon

*Minutes submitted by Sarah Carpentieri-Asbury on behalf of Anne Geddes, PTO Secretary, who was not available for this meeting

*Thank you to Mr. Reyna who provided a delicious selection of breakfast burritos for this meeting