

MIAMI PALMETTO SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL PTSA
GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING - FEBRUARY 18, 2009

The meeting was called to order by President Andrea Shosfy at 9:17 a.m. She welcomed Pinecrest Mayor Cindy Lerner, School Board Member Dr. Larry Feldman, and Pinecrest Council Member Nancy Harter.

Legislative Program/Postcards: Members were shown the film produced by 11th grade student, Noah Gray, about the 7th year anniversary of the “No Child Left Behind” legislation and the fact that 50 percent of students who enter high school nationwide, do not graduate. Florida is 50th out of the 50 States in funding public education and this was before the current funding cuts. Parents are unaware of how dire the situation is. The complete 10-minute video can be viewed on You Tube and has a link on our PTSA website (utube.com/cateatcatproductions).

Legislative Chair, Jennifer Wollmann, asked members to send post cards to their house representatives, state senators, and Governor Crist. Our expected State deficit this year is five billion dollars and the governor has proposed another \$600,000 reduction in property tax cuts. This is an economic issue for the State. The State’s revenue source is too dependent on real estate and the hotel and tourism industry. We do not have an educated workforce to offer to potential companies who might consider moving to our State. Our Florida graduation rate is only 65 percent. We must inform our legislators what we are willing to give up: \$250 benefit from the increased homestead exemption law from last year, taxes on bottled water, etc. Our Legislature needs to look at the big picture.

Florida might not qualify for Federal stimulus money because one of the requirements to be eligible to receive the funds is that your education funding has to be at 2006 levels. Unfortunately, Florida has been cutting funding for education every year, so we don’t qualify. Mayor Lerner told us that the next Advisory Council meeting is 03/03 at 9:30 a.m. in the Pinecrest Community Center Pine Room. All legislators are running for reelection in 2 years and we have to let them know that we are watching.

Members were asked to take a look at Votesmart.org. It is a nonpartisan and independent website. Put in your legislator’s name and it will tell you how they voted on education, health care, etc. Dr. Feldman said the Dade delegation is the strongest that it has been in years. Last year, it took \$35 million from our schools and the School Board had to sue them to try and get some of the money back. The Dade delegation is not fighting for our schools. They have already agreed to take \$50 million from next year’s budget. Seven years ago, the State paid 70% of all revenue to the school system. Locally, we paid 30%. Now, the State pays 48% and we pay 52%.

We are in an emotional issue between the School Board and the teachers. We are the thinnest, leanest in administration-to-student ratio in the State of Florida. If we follow the Broward model, we will have to eliminate art, music, and PE teachers from every elementary school and lose 1,000 people in one day. His Community Liaison, Maura Valeiras, is at our school every Tuesday from 9:15 a.m. to 10:45 a.m. and is available for parents to come in and meet with her to discuss issues.

Mr. Weiner stated there will be a long term impact on education in the State depending on what decisions the Legislature makes today. We must voice our concerns. In November 2008, the District went into every school’s discretionary, hourly, overtime and substitute accounts and took 20% resulting in a \$100,000 loss to our school. Although the loss did not impact classroom supplies, we did lose an AP, Mr. O’Conner, who now teaches at Miami Springs SHS. Approximately 15 extra teaching period supplements had to be eliminated for the second half of the year, but that had

nothing to do with the 20% taken. Some classes were combined and only 30 students had schedule changes. We did have to eliminate one teacher position. These were internal budget cuts.

He doesn't know what the future will bring and won't know until March or early April if or how much our school's budget allocation will decrease. Dr. Feldman interjected that the State probably won't give the funds for summer school; and, as a result, the District will only be able to fund for failing students (course recovery). Mr. Weiner suggested the virtual school or adult education at night for a fee. Our school is over 100% capacity and we anticipate losing 200 students next year because of the new high school opening in Kendall. Our current population is approximately 3,300 kids. A discussion ensued about out-of-area transfer procedures and decisions made at the Regional level. Mr. Weiner said falsified information is fought on a daily basis. He anticipates private school kids coming to our school will make up for the number we lose to the new YYY school in Kendall.

Taste of Pinecrest: Chair Caryn Tanis-Boren advised the event is set for 03/08 at Pinecrest Gardens. Volunteers are needed to work 2-hour shifts. Unlimited ride arm bands are \$10 a piece for younger children. Raffle tickets are being sold, too.

Approve Minutes: The minutes of the 11/19/08 General Membership Meeting were presented. A motion was made by Becky Herget to approve the minutes which was 2nd and approved.

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Isabel McBrayer distributed an updated budget reflecting that more income and expenses came in. Money lent to the 50th Anniversary Committee was returned in full with an additional \$1,000. Jennifer Wollmann made a motion to approve the budget as updated which was 2nd and approved.

Nominating Committee: Randi Trazenfeld, Jeffrey Solomon, and Ms. Shosfy volunteered to be on the Nominating Committee. We need 2 more people to join.

EESAC: Nancy Harter reported that their last meeting included a midyear review of the School Improvement Plan. They agreed to fund the school's subscription to "turn it in.com", fund an accelerated reader program for the library, and have our school community vote on mandatory uniforms for 9th through 12th graders.

Student Activities Report: Student Council representative, Elizabeth Kobert, announced ongoing student activities. Parent volunteers are needed to help supervise the Senior Picnic on April 1st. Plant the Pride is scheduled for Saturday, March 21st at 7:30 a.m.

Miscellaneous: The Challenge Success program is meeting here at 11 a.m. The play "Melt" will be performed on 03/15 at 3:30 p.m. at the Gusman Performing Arts Center. Our next general meeting is 03/18 at 7 p.m. in the auditorium. A drug and alcohol awareness program will follow the meeting. Mary Steele asks that you report your volunteer hours to her ASAP. Forms are available at today's meeting or email her at Mes6841@hotmail.com.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:24 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by
Roxy Lancella, Recording Secretary

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