

**PLEASE NOTE: THE FOLLOWING IS A SUMMARY OF THE MEETING.**  
**OFFICIAL MINUTES WILL BE POSTED ONCE APPROVED BY**  
**THE GENERAL MEMBERSHIP AT THE NEXT MEETING.**

MIAMI PALMETTO SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL PTSA  
GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING – MARCH 19, 2008

The meeting was called to order by President Andrea Shosfy at 9:13 a.m.

Guest Speaker: After being introduced, School Board Member Evelyn Greer said it was a pleasure to be here in her city. Several items were approved at the last School Board meeting, one of which authorizes the beginning of construction of the reliever school for PHS. The school will be at 86<sup>th</sup> Street and SW 107<sup>th</sup> Avenue and is being planned as a magnet and feeder pattern school to open in August 2010. It will relieve both Killian and PHS. Once it is open, PHS's student population should drop to 2,750 from the current 3,400 students.

This area of town is the most overcrowded and was the most overcrowded of all areas when she ran for the School Board in 2004. As of August 2008, 6 new schools will open in this district and 4 south of here. In the last 3 years, the district has added approximately 56,000 new seats. PHS was at 143% occupancy when the class size reduction Constitutional Amendment was adopted. It must be complied with by 2010.

All of the MAST, DASH, and New World Schools were developed downtown which made access for South Dade students difficult. Ms. Greer asked, "What is the distribution of magnet and special programs in the entire county?" She requested a plan be developed, like the overcrowding plan, to specify where we should build now and for future development. She also asked, "Where are the special programs now and how do we equitably distribute the new ones rolling out in the next 3 to 5 years?" As a result of the new plan, more new programs are being developed in South Dade including a math and science magnet high school next to the zoo in partnership with the University of Miami. It will be equal to the Bronx High School of Science and students will have an opportunity to do internships at UM.

In addition, a Fine Arts school is planned on SW 216<sup>th</sup> Street where the County is building a Fine Arts center. The School Board is in conversations with the County about it. Commissioners Katy Sorensen and Dennis Moss are trying to move that idea forward and want it to be like New World School of the Arts downtown. In the old Homestead Hospital, a Medical Arts magnet high school is planned in partnership with Baptist Hospital. It will be a good alternative for students interested in the medical or science fields.

In August 2008, South Dade Senior High School should be open. Students from F.C. Martin will be able to go there instead of to Coral Reef High for the IB program, college honors, AP enrichment, foreign language, etc. It is a brand new \$90,000,000 school. Also, Centennial Middle School in Cutler Bay is considering adding a small magnet school of 600 to 800 students.

In Florida, school children are funded the same amount of money no matter where they live. Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach Counties used to get a district cost differential because our cost of living is so much higher. The cost differential was done away with; and, since then, we have a \$212,000,000 loss to Dade County for this year. Forty percent of our local tax bill goes to the School Board; but, as our tax base grew, the taxes grew to almost 60%. In Dade County, we pay a disproportionate share compared to other counties in the State. Other Florida counties have a much lower percentage. To help all counties reach the same level of funding, the State gives General Operating money away to the counties with lower percentages.

Currently, \$2.4 billion is spent on teachers and all staff in the schools. The Board entered into a contract a few years ago so starting teacher salaries would get to \$40,000. The cost of that increase was \$60,000,000 out of the \$105,000,000 increase we received last year. By the time the cost of living is figured in, you basically are at zero. We still have increases in gas, maintenance, etc. We had to cut the budget and, as the State has slipped into a recession, we have had to cut \$28,000,000 more in the fall. \$19 million has been lost in addition to the Constitutional Amendment voted on in January. We have to cut an additional \$34 million. We are back to a zero increase from last year.

The State anticipates that next year's budget short fall will be \$200 million, so everything is on the table (transportation, downsizing of regional offices, school police, overtime, field trips, museum programs, etc.). Anything that is not "core" is on the table. The State provides School Boards with an Allocation Manual. It is a book that describes how money is allocated by a formula with addendas to make it work in real life. The School Board cannot have a budget deficit and cannot borrow money to fund a deficit. Consider the allocation for security at a school like PHS vs. a school where fights are a daily occurrence.

The School Board will be reaching out to PTA/PTSAs and communities to let the State know that they can't strip schools of all available cash balances. That will penalize schools that have budgeted well. We cannot strip out our reserves. She encouraged us to be as active as possible with the State Legislature. They are funding special, small little programs rather than overall, general school funds. Too many pet programs are taking money from the General Budget that can fund teacher salaries. Ask them not to give us any more special programs or categories but put the money in the General Fund. Also, tell them that they promised schools would be held harmless and that schools wouldn't be hurt. But now, they have not kept their promises.

When school personnel are cut, it will deeply impact students. Florida per student funding is ranked 50<sup>th</sup> in the USA. After the sought-for budget cuts, we will be 53<sup>rd</sup>. The membership asked Ms. Greer the following questions.

*How is PHS's population going to be reduced by 700 students?* Vineland and Leewood Elementary Schools are being converted to K to 8 and will relieve Palmetto Middle (opening August 2008). The new magnet school will have 1,600 students and parents who live on the west side of Dixie Highway can elect to send their kids to it rather than PHS. If the new high school can't attract enough students, then the Board will consider boundary changes.

*How is it possible to build all these school with budget cuts?* Under the class reduction amendment, enough schools must be built by 2010 or the schools will be penalized. Over the last 5 years, Dade County has lost 30,000 students. Starting in 2004, the School Board started an aggressive building program. There is also the issue of under-enrolled schools. We can't afford to operate schools at only 40%-50% of capacity. They are largely downtown and up to 125<sup>th</sup> Street in the older areas of town. Financially, it doesn't make any sense. We have to get the public to understand that we can't afford it.

*How can we close schools and justify building new ones? Why can't we fund all the schools equally?* All funding at every school in the district is the same. In addition, a Title One school gets extra funding from the federal and state/county governments. It is not an issue of funding, however. If you have 5 schools within walking distance of each other in a densely populated urban area, but you have money to only fund 2 of the schools with staff, personnel, etc., it doesn't make sense to keep the other 3 schools open. Magnet schools draw off some kids but not enough. We need to close schools that are under-enrolled and that have no future prospects that more students will attend.

*What about the proposed reduction in our property taxes and the penny sales tax issue?* It will strip \$4 billion over 10 years from the schools. For Dade County, it is worst than that. If Dade's money goes to Tallahassee, they distribute it and we will be at the mercy of Central and North Florida Legislators. We represent 15% of the State's school population even though we only get 6% for building new schools. The Legislature gives the most money to growing school districts not ones like Dade County where the student population is decreasing. Any formula that is created in Tallahassee will hurt Dade County.

Our Legislators are not supportive of public education and, particularly, public education in South Florida. We are required to send an "equalization" to other counties because we raise so much money here in Dade County. Contact her by email if you have questions ([evelyngreer@greerco.com](mailto:evelyngreer@greerco.com)) or you can reach her through Riva Steinman.

Treasurer's Report: Isabel McBrayer reported that the only significant change was that Special Projects are delineated at \$25,000 which we approved a couple of meetings ago. Contact her if you have any questions.

Old Business:

Taste of Pinecrest: Nancy Harter stated that it was the best it has ever been with approximately 6,800 people attending. Because of the current economic problems, the sponsorship probably will not be as much as last year. The football team was there in force and was a great help. The Omega Singers performed to a full audience.

New Business:

Volunteers: Ms. Harter said that volunteers are needed on March 26<sup>th</sup> as chaperones for the Senior Picnic at Metrozoo. Please contact Angie Lima at [aflima@dadeschools.net](mailto:aflima@dadeschools.net). Mary Steele asks that you fill out the volunteer hours form and get it to her at [Mes6841@hotmail.com](mailto:Mes6841@hotmail.com).

End of Year Staff Luncheon: Lauren Mayer let us know that the luncheon is scheduled for Wednesday, June 4<sup>th</sup>. She and co-chair, Debbie Lichtner, need volunteers to help set up and serve and bring desserts. They can be contacted at [laurenmayer@bellsouth.net](mailto:laurenmayer@bellsouth.net) or [sjlichtner1@bellsouth.net](mailto:sjlichtner1@bellsouth.net).

Student Council Representative: Mansi Baid had several announcements. Chaperones are needed for the Senior Picnic on March 26<sup>th</sup>. We will meet in the auditorium at 8:30 a.m. and should be back to school by 1:30 p.m. Prom tickets are on sale now through March 28<sup>th</sup>. Student Council elections are March 27<sup>th</sup>. Graduation is scheduled for June 6<sup>th</sup> and each student gets 6 tickets.

Legislative: President Shosfy said that Legislative Chair Jennifer Wollmann felt Ms. Greer covered all pending issues.

Principal's Report: Principal Weiner personally thanked Ms. Greer for the magnificent job she did at the last School Board meeting. She made a presentation that swayed the School Board, by a vote of 7 to 2, to allow the schools to hold on to their discretionary accounts used to pay for basic supplies, paper, light bulbs, materials, etc.

The School Board has adopted a new Code of Student Contact. In order to save printing costs, it will be available online. Students will get a letter to take home that contains an overview of the new Code and directs them to the website to go to. Parents are asked to sign off on the letter and return it to the school.

We have 2 Intel Science Award semi-finalists at PHS: Alexander Li and Joy Jiao. In addition, we are the only high school in Florida to receive the Siemens Award for Advance Placement and Rui Yang is one of only two student winners for the State of Florida. As a result, we will receive a \$1,000 grant from Siemens.

FCAT testing is over and over 98% took the test. The student FCAT incentive package was presented to the kids 2 weeks ago. This Friday and next Friday are Teacher Work Days. Spring Break is March 31<sup>st</sup> through April 4<sup>th</sup> with classes starting on April 7<sup>th</sup>. On March 26<sup>th</sup>, we have the Annual Senior Picnic at Metrozoo. We are required to have 1 chaperone for every 15 kids. Every teacher that we can keep in school and not have to hire a substitute for saves us \$100. Please contact Dee Jordan in the office if you can volunteer.

A parent asked if summer school will be impacted by budget cuts. Mr. Weiner stated that \$16,000,000 was previously allocated for summer school. Ms. Greer told him that summer school is "on the table" now. Days of academic enhancement through attending summer school are over. The purpose now is recovery. Another parent questioned why doesn't PHS start a magnet program here to keep bright kids from going to other schools. Mr. Weiner advised he needs parents and community members to advocate for it. It would make us more competitive; but, in reality, the numbers we have here (pass rate of 62% in AP classes) are outstanding.

A member was wondering if P.E. be offered in summer school. The Night School Principal, Dr. Edward Gehret, met with EESAC a few days ago. His funding has been slashed dramatically. There won't a decision made until after spring break. Mr. Weiner will talk to Doctor Gehret about P.E. Maybe kids paying more for it will help keep it alive. He feels we really need to keep that program going and will let us know once he hears something.

In regard to Plant the Pride, Mr. Weiner was amazed and thanked the PTSA for funding the t-shirts for the event. Over 500 students and teachers volunteered. The energy and

dedication of the volunteers was phenomenal. The commitment and pride that teachers and kids have never ceases to amaze him.

Nomination Slate: Randi Trazenfeld thanked the committee members, Claudia Glasson, Lynne Schaefer, Mary Steele, and Sandra West, for all their hard work. Only one Executive Board position is open (Corresponding Secretary). If you know anyone who might be interested, let her know ([Randibrt@aol.com](mailto:Randibrt@aol.com)). The election will be at our next meeting on April 16<sup>th</sup> and nominations can be taken from the floor at that time. There a few other open positions (book sale, media center, newsletter subcommittee chair to make photocopies, etc.).

Announcements: Media Specialist Dian Adjamah made a presentation about the "Spring Reading Rap Session." Ongoing for over 8 years, it is a program to encourage kids to do recreational reading. She distributed a flyer containing a book review form and volunteer sign up. The Media Center is trying to be budget conscience and wants to get kids to focus on the joy of reading not prizes or other incentives they might get. She asked parents to send in baked goods, \$10 gift cards to Starbucks, Quiznos, McDonalds, etc. One or two gift cards would be a great help. The student's book review deadline is April 9<sup>th</sup> after spring break. Already, 250 reviews have been turned in. The grand prize is an i-pod from the Rotary. Starbucks has agreed to provide some of the goodies, but she asked parents to donate baked goods and finger foods for the April 23<sup>rd</sup> event. For more information, call the Media Center at ext. 2259 or send an e-mail to [dadjamah@dadeschools.net](mailto:dadjamah@dadeschools.net).

Our next meeting is Wednesday, April 16<sup>th</sup>, in the Media Center. PHS's Teacher of the Year, Terri Ortiz, will be our guest speaker.

Miscellaneous: Cheerleading Booster Club representatives, Carol Maggiore and Jackie Reese, inquired as to what was the protocol for requesting funds from the PTSA. The cheerleaders participate in a lot of activities inside and outside of the school. Their competition squad dissolved this year because of new limitations on fundraising. They are unable to have a carwash this year due to water restrictions. Cheerleaders need new uniforms and are seeking help from the PTSA, if possible (30 uniforms at a cost of \$150-\$180 each, totaling \$5,000). The current AV uniforms will be passed down to the JV. Members expressed concern about setting a precedent of the PTSA sponsoring booster clubs and felt it was an issue the Executive Board should discuss first before presenting it to general membership. In the past, booster clubs have not received funds from the PTSA.

Approve Minutes: The minutes of the February 20, 2008, General Membership Meeting were presented. A modification was made to correct the spelling of EESAC under Special Projects. Nancy Harter made a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Randi Trazenfeld and approved as corrected.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by  
Roxy Lancellata, Recording Secretary

PHSPTSA 03 19 08