



## Meeting Minutes

Minutes of  
**George Mason Elementary School**  
General PTA Membership Meeting  
December 3, 2018

1. Call Meeting to Order at 7:03 p.m.
2. Approve Minutes from October 22, 2018
3. Update by Brian Orrenmaa, Principal
  - a. Pizza and Book event in Arlandria, 6:30pm at Fifer Center, 607 Notabene Ave.
  - b. Kagan and Words their Way consultants coming to GM to work with teachers and students
  - c. Special Education Author also coming soon
  - d. Prospective Parent Open House, 11/13/18 at 3pm. No activities planned for students. Most beneficial for parents unfamiliar with Mason, geared toward parents deciding between private and public. Spring Open House is geared towards those planning to attend and will have activities for kids
4. Committee Reports –
  - a. President
    - i. Holiday Giving Tree

A few sponsor positions are open and there are some slots for the day of receiving gifts, see PTA email for sign ups
    - ii. Playground

Greta and Mr. O have been meeting and in communication with the Playground rep. The executive board will meet at the beginning of January. Once the executive board meets, we will look to form a smaller PTA Playground committee on getting more input e.g. community members, young child families, parents, etc.
  - b. PTAC update
    - i. By-laws for PTA need to be updated this year, voted on and approved at the PTAC meeting
    - ii. After School Programs across ACPS. How they differ and how they are delivered to the needs of the school population
    - iii. CIP discussion, public opinion Thursday, talking about bumping the George Mason rebuild out another year. Cindy Anderson – will get back to us on the date. Still looking for swing space for MacArthur students
  - c. Treasurer – budget status
    - i. Current balance sheet is on table

- ii. Our 990 went in, thank you to Steve and Katherine Travis, you can inspect the public copy in the office
  - iii. iPads are moving forward, science equipment has been purchased, this fall we did \$1800 in scholarships
- d. Fundraising
- i. POP, Saturday, March 23, 2019
    - i. Jessica O'Neil just uploaded sponsorship document. Please consider making donations!
  - ii. Pasta for Pages – big success! Final number to be announced
  - iii. Restaurant Night – Thank you for coming to Los Tios, stay tuned for Spring Restaurant Night announcement

5. Presentation/Q&A with ACPS Superintendent, Dr. Gregory C. Hutchings

I am an Alexandrian. Excited to be back and to serve, taking steps forward. I am from Alexandria, I went through many elementary schools - four actually, Patrick Henry for kindergarten, first grade for Polk, went to Mt Vernon 2<sup>nd</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup>, William Ramsay for 6<sup>th</sup>, Hammond for 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup>, and TC 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>. Graduated in 1995. Graduated TC Williams, got to college and was a pre-med major. My junior year my professor announced at the start of Organic Chemistry that 50% would pass and 50% would not and the 50% that did not should consider pursuing other majors. I was part of the 50% that did not pass, I tried multiple times but then decided to change my major. I majored in math and science. Fell in love with Education but didn't discover education until I was in college... fast forward to now I recently served as a Superintendent in Shaker Heights of Cleveland. It was a smaller school district with some significant achievement gaps. I see that [time] as my practice for coming back home. I learned a lot of lessons about being a Superintendent. I hope to be just as successful, if not more here.

I want to hear what the community is saying, have face time with parents and the PTA. I see our relationship as a partnership between ACPS and parents. I view any concern that comes across my desk as having at least some truth.

Questions:

1. Handwriting? Focus division wide K-5? One thing we are trying to do is to expand handwriting in our curriculum. Embedded in curriculum K-3. What could that look like in 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade? We need to work with teachers to determine what the best approach is for the upper grades. I acknowledge we are in the technology age, but students need to know how to write their names, print and use cursive. We don't want to produce students who have not been exposed properly to writing.
2. Recycling Program? One challenge in some schools was a lack of use of the recycling bins. There are dumpsters for both. If the recycling bin is contaminated in any way then it can't be recycled. We need best practices in place that custodial services are dumping things in the right bin. We are coming up with specific expectations. We need to establish an ACPS standard. Regardless of what building you are in there should be standards for how things are taken care of. We need consistency across the district.
3. Facilities? Our goal is to have another George Mason in 2026. Not tomorrow so what do we do in the meantime? When I visited I went to Rm 12, Sandy Slavin's room, there was water dripping into the bucket. We have had some differed maintenance issues across the district. It will take us several years to catch up and establish a preventative maintenance program. One thing we are doing this spring is a building assessment of every building. The last one that was done in

2014 but was not as comprehensive. We want to know what the piping system looks like, HVAC, roof, humidity across the building. Major issues and concerns so we can put together a plan and respond appropriately. Right now we are working on our RFP. Goal is to start in February/March. The assessment will take about 60 days once it starts. Will do a prioritization process. For next year's CIP we will have data to support why we are asking for specific items. We believe it will help put us in a better situation. Please keep in mind that we had a lot of record breaking rain [this past year] and that didn't help for buildings that were not maintained. Not making excuses as we have not had a preventative maintenance. New COO, new director of facilities. We are keeping a record of all the work orders. I hope to be able to provide a more comprehensive approach in the Spring.

4. Amazon? We really don't know the impact Amazon will have on ACPS. Will enrollment increase? Decline with increasing property values? We are working closely with the City. The process to bring Amazon to Northern Virginia was a huge partnership and collaboration effort. Don't know what enrollment projections will look like.
5. High school project? Our first session in November was talking about our educational vision. We know it is beyond the capacity. We need connectiveness, to provide equity and diversity, etc. One thing we talked about in our process of elimination – we know we are at 4,000 [students] and they project another 1,000. TC at present is fit for 2,900. Options are [1] expanding the current building to accommodate an additional 2,000 kids but where? We already have issues with parking, other structures like Chinguapin, etc. It isn't realistically an option to build on [to the existing building]. The second option [2] was to build a second high school. Sounds like the easiest option build another high school... but how do you determine who goes to the other high school? Everyone thinks it sounds good until you start drawing lines and then you have another fight like redistricting. Also you want to ensure diversity across the school. Reality is that neighborhoods [in Alexandria city] are segregated. When we do school zones [by neighborhood] there is potential for segregated schools which won't work. Where would we build another high school? When we did community outreach, the community survey says we do not want another high school. The third option [3] is we have TC and we have to have other sites where classes are being taken to get kids off of the main campus. We need to be able to accommodate 2,000. This option seems most feasible. We already have some practice with our satellite campus, Chance for Change (Old Town), we are now partnering Northern Virginia Community College – early college – 400 kids will graduate TC with a high school and Associate's degree, and the newly announced partnership with Virginia Tech. We have some structures [already] in place. How do we build on that? There is no feeder for dual language programs... maybe that is an independent site? What programs can we enhance for kids to take classes? The grappling with the options is part of the process. I don't know how it worked before [the article in the press] but I hope the news moving forward to be more collaborative, we are all on the same team. I hope the city newspapers will look at this as a joint process. I am also learning.
6. Have there been surveys that Alexandria does not want a second high school? Appendix of the survey results and focus groups. Electronic School Board documents are available online. <https://www.acps.k12.va.us/Page/2260>
7. Considered year-round school? Samuel Tucker has modified full year program. We have not talked about adding more school. ACPS 2025 planning process that may come up. But right now that hasn't been a topic of discussion.
8. Team teaching at the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade level? We allocate teachers in February/March and look at projections for the following year. We look at 24 kids per teacher. Depending on what the overall total population that determines how we allocate teachers. Sometimes we have situations where a class is smaller and then we have discussions about rearranging. It's hard to

answer today. With redistricting our enrollment numbers changed. We won't get a true sense of what George Mason looks like until after next year. We have had situations where we have increased out enrollment caps over our limit to accommodate new families such as military. It will depend on the overall numbers look. One example might be a half fourth and half fifth could be a possibility – there are creative opportunities. Unrealistic to have two extra teachers if the enrollment numbers were for only three teachers in each grade.

9. Enrollment projections for TC building were off by magnitudes? We have been accurate around 99% for the past four years. The trend in home owner preference has changed. As we move forward we hope to know what will happen with Amazon. We might price people out of here who have children. Looking at the new construction, one and two bedroom places but they don't have kids.
  10. Best on current projections is there discussions about raising the caps moving forward? Our class size has always been 24. K-1<sup>st</sup> grade is 22. Policy says 25. There has been no discussion on permanently raising that cap. At the elementary numbers, we are looking at opening a new school in the next 10 years. We are seeing a trend in increasing elementary numbers. Ferdinand Day is not yet at capacity.
  11. Is there a number at which the satellite plan will not work? Interpreted part of the article with satellite campuses posing challenges to diversity. Doesn't necessarily increase diversity. Do we want to be tied to a second high school space if our enrollment numbers drop? We don't know the future we need to rethink the concept of high school, a traditional setting may not be what works best. We need to find other ways for students to have other learning opportunities or environments. Outside of the box thinking, creative options, but I know it's hard.
  12. Has enrollment ever gone down? We used to have four high schools in the 40s and 50s. We at one time had a lot more schools across our school divisions.
  13. Read Building the Federal Schoolhouse – history of Alexandria schools.
6. Adjourn!

The meeting adjourned at 8:16 pm.