

**Minutes of the James Madison High School PTSA  
Monday, April 8, 2019**

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 pm.

**In attendance:** Greg Hood, Timothy Buckley, Beth Eachus, Sarah Helmicki, Ellen MacGregor, Monica Ansel, Marcy Davidson, Ellen Korenko, Anne-Stuart Kirkhorn, Kelly Breedlove, Sonya Marsden, Cathy Wasilewski, Michele Dandrea Lowell, Rossana Carney, Kebra Krol, Sylvia Martin Estes, Ryan Go, Adam Rizzoli, Heather Colbert, Luke Kurcina, Aaron Liu, Sarah Espanol, Susan Kenney, Christopher Lande, Eileen Sciuto, Lynn Sabia, Naomi Hutchins, Cheronda Farrish, Ashley Anderson, Joy Korones, Allison Sarfati.

**I. Call to Order and Welcome – Beth Eachus**

**II. Approval of October PTSA Meeting Minutes – Sarah Helmicki**

Sarah Helmicki provided the March 2019 PTSA minutes. Beth asked for comments. No comments or changes were suggested. Marcy Davidson made a motion to approve the minutes as written. Anne Stuart Kirkhorn seconded. The minutes were approved as written.

**III. Principal Report – Principal Greg Hood**

Mr. Hood thanked the PTSA for supporting the Deeper Learning Conference. He followed by introducing some of the JMHS staff that attended the conference. First, Ashley Anderson, a member of the counseling staff who attended the conference, thanked the PTSA for providing funds to send staff to the conference. She noted that the conference helped her how to understand how to meet students at their level and how to better support students. Joy Korones, a teacher in the English department, spoke next and also thanked the PTSA for sending her to the conference. She explained that she enjoyed the opportunity to develop professionally within the “deeper learning” initiative. The conference addressed the big question, “Why we are educators?” At the conference, participants discussed Fairfax County’s “portrait of a graduate.” Mrs. Korones noted that it was interesting to see how JMHS school initiatives already align standards and skills that are tied to the portrait of a graduate. Lastly, Allie Sarfati spoke about her experience at the conference. She attended a session called This is Water, which initially seemed like it would not be applicable to Ms. Sarfati’s classroom, but the facilitator of the discussion talked about the “Harkness method” as a strategy to get students to participate in class. While it was intended to be an English class strategy, Ms. Sarfati implemented it in her class. She had students sit in groups of 10. She had a moderator for each group that led discussion on climate change. Another student acted as the observer to make sure everyone was speaking and no one student dominated the discussion. The moderator engaged all students. She found that even quiet students participated in this style of discussion, so it was quite effective in the classroom. After the teachers who attended the conference finished speaking, Beth read a note from Mary Gonzalez who also attended the conference. She also thanked the PTSA for sending her to the conference as well.

Mr. Hood then spoke and explained that the keynote speaker from the conference was Ted Dintersmith who lectures on the need to transform education into a new model to prepare students for the career and citizenship demands of an increasingly innovative world. Through his documentary “Most Likely to Succeed” and his book “What School Could Be,” Mr. Dintersmith inspires teachers to address the shortcomings of traditional school. Mr. Dintersmith is a JMHS graduate from the 1970’s and has great ideas for teaching kids what they need to succeed in today’s world, including skills such as collaboration, creativity, and initiative. Mr. Hood also thanked the PTSA again for sending some of the staff to the conference.

**IV. Student Services – Timothy Buckley**

Mr. Buckley shared with the group that this Thursday, April 11 is Jamnesty, a great event that is put on by Amnesty International. The group creates a “coffee house” atmosphere in Warhawk Hall. About a dozen different student acts each play 2-3 songs. Some play acoustic and others have a full band. The event is very well done and will begin at 6:30pm. The Pyramid Art Show is also April 11 and will take place between 6-7:30pm.

Mr. Buckley announced that Ms. Robarge had her baby so Mr. Gamberelli, a former JMHS counselor, is filling in as a long-term sub.

Counselors are starting to identify who could be a mentor next year. Student mentors will be trained in spring 2019 and then have a half-day in the summer prior to Flight School, which will now be held on the same day as the Fall Kick Off. Flight School will be led by 150+ junior and senior mentors who will lead a 3 hour session with

the mentees. Freshmen will get lockers schedules during flight school from 1-4pm, and then the fall kickoff will take place from 4-6pm. With these changes, staff hope that more freshmen will participate.

Mr. Buckley also reminded parents that Ms. Anderson who is in charge of AP testing still has spots available for parents to proctor AP exams. Volunteers would be welcomed.

#### **V. Faculty Report – Ms. Petty**

Ms. Petty was not at the PTSA meeting as other teachers were at the meeting to discuss the Deeper Learning Conference. Their feedback is described under Principal's Report.

#### **VI. Student Report**

The SGA President, Heather Colbert, explained that the Mr. Madison event will take place on 5/11. The SGA plans to make the event more family friendly this year. The Junior representative indicated that their next event is the junior/senior prom. They are ahead of plan with a DJ secured and décor planned. The theme is Starry Night, and the event will take place at State Theater on 4/26. Sophomores and freshmen are working on Madison Matters week that will take place during the SOL week, 5/20-24. Events are planned for relaxation and stress relief to promote mental wellness.

#### **VII. President's Report – Beth Eachus**

Beth reported that the Digital Art class met with the PTSA board to talk about creating a logo, website tag line and other designs to brand the JMHS PTSA. Winning designs were presented at the PTSA meeting. The website already has the new branding. Stationary and thank you notes have been ordered as well. Beth asked for approval from the group to make a donation to the technical arts department for their work. Chris Lande made a motion to make \$300 donation to technical arts department. Ellen MacGregor seconded. The motion passed as presented.

Beth thanked a number of people for their efforts during the school year. First, she thanked Ellen MacGregor for her efforts with Mock Testing, which was just completed. There were 8 different sessions for SAT and ACT. These tests are a service to the students but they also make money that PTSA uses for teacher development, including the Deeper Learning Conference.

Beth also thanked Monica Anshel who wrapped up parent programs for the year. The final presentation on navigating the college admission process was attended by 90 people and was presented by the founder of Applerouth Tutoring. Beth noted that Monica is also responsible for student scholarships and teacher awards. This process is just beginning.

Beth lastly thanked Kebra Krol for her work and efforts for a successful Teacher Appreciation Week. The next teacher appreciation event will take place on 4/24. This is the last event that needs donations, but the sign up genius list is almost full. Kebra thanked all the parents for always supporting the teacher appreciation events. May 8 will be the last teacher appreciation event, which will be a breakfast for teachers.

Beth asked if the Pantry had a report. Anne-Stuart Kirkhorn reported that everything is status quo. Since the co-chairs for this school year have graduating seniors, Susan Kenny will be taking over.

#### **VIII. Treasurer's Report – Marcy Davidson**

Marcy reported that the 2<sup>nd</sup> PTSA dues payment was made. JMHS PTSA now has 552 members. In addition, the total earned with dues exceeded our budgeted donations amount.

#### **IX. New Business**

With the potential of bad weather, Beth moved the presentation of the PTSA Officer's slate before the committee reports. The PTSA solicited people for open offices and some candidates came forward to volunteer. Marcy Davidson presented the following slate:

Beth Eachus, President  
Sonya Marsden – Vice President  
Ellen MacGregor – 2nd Vice President  
Treasurer – Tarah Weaver  
Secretary – Sarah Helmicki

After the slate was presented, Beth noted that the actual vote for the PTSA board would take place at the May PTSA meeting, which is the last meeting of the year.

Next, we had an update on the Mindful Memorial. This is a school-wide volunteer project that will take place on Friday, 4/12/19, prior to Spring Break. Dr. Farrish, JMHS Assistant Principal, will talk to the students about the shared volunteer event to honor fallen soldiers. Students will remain in their Warhawk time to assemble ribbons and cards on Friday. Any that are not completed can be finished on 5/17. Mr. Hood will send KIT and will do a press release, which the administration is hoping will be picked up by media. For more information, please check out the website: [Mindfulmemorialday.org](http://Mindfulmemorialday.org).

Lynn Sabia, a JMHS parent who works for the organization that manages the Mindful Memorial, thanked the PTA and the school for the support with the Mindful Memorial. Many the JMHS community including administration and teachers believe that it will be good for the community. Lynn noted that she is available by email ([lynn@armor-down.com](mailto:lynn@armor-down.com)). Every student/staff member will have an opportunity to create a ribbon and card. There are additional opportunities to go down and hang these at Arlington Cemetery, and remove them on another day and either place them over someone's head or, if they are buried at Arlington, visit gravesites. For more information, please contact Lynn or visit the website.

It was noted that the PTSA would be giving awards to students and teachers. The Triple I award (innovate, instruct and impact) is for teachers and is separate from county teacher of the year. Parents, other teachers or students can nominate teachers by May 3. Ten teachers are chosen. Those selected will get a gift certificate (\$250) and lanyard. There is also a "Making a Difference" scholarship for students. Applications are due May 3. Three awards of \$1000 are given to selected students.

With respect to graduation, Baccalaureate will take place on June 6 at Vienna Presbyterian Church from 6-7pm. It will be followed by a reception. Invitations will be going to senior families.

Additional school calendar information was discussed. Now school systems can start before Labor Day, but the Friday before Labor Day has to be a holiday. This was just approved. The Friday that is off will likely mean that a school planning day in February or March will no longer be scheduled in the calendar.

Graduation date for 2020 was discussed. FCPS will be managing the schedule for DAR and Eagle Bank. Six FCPS schools graduate at DAR. JMHS will continue to use DAR, but the time will change year to year. JMHS is hesitant to move to Eagle Bank because the window for graduation is small, even though it is a bigger venue.

#### **X. Committee Reports – Beth Eachus and Committee Chairs**

Academic boosters – In 2019/20 mock testing, the Academic Boosters want to be able to provide extra time for those who are eligible to have it for both the SAT and ACT. This is planned for 2 different test times next year.

All Night Grad – The committee is looking for donations from area businesses. Please make suggestions. There will be a sign up genius after spring break for food and volunteers for the All Night Grad night. Please ensure to tell senior parents to make sure they pay for the event – May 15 is the next deadline. The committee plans to do raffles in the school to engage students and get them to sign up.

Teacher Appreciation – Nothing additional to report.

Band – Some JMHS band members who were invited to All Virginia Band. On April 26, the jazz band will be performing outside the National Museum for American history between 2-3pm. This event is free.

Drama –The Drama Kids Camp took place on April 5. Fifty-eight middle and grade school students participated, and 32 drama students ran the program. The spring musical, West Side Story, will run on 5/2- 4. Many members of the band will perform in the spring musical. A professional choreographer did the fight scene with the cast. The drama group will go to New York City on May 18. Thespian Honor Society will hold an event on 5/24. There is a Cappy event on 5/27 where students and productions will be honored.

Special Education – Warhawk Buddies, which was a stand-alone group, joined Best Buddies, which is national group. Kids from JMHS were invited to the Best Buddies prom where 200 students were taken to Washington DC with 5 charter buses. The event was held at the Reagan building. It was an incredible event and included buddies and students with disabilities. The group thanked the PTSA who initially gave money to the group to get the organization started at JMHS.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 pm.