

HAVENS PARENT CLUB MEETING
Tuesday October 23rd at 7pm in the Havens Library

Call to Order/Welcome/Passing of Roll Call Sheet: Laura Amen

Present at the Meeting: Laura Amen, Lindsay Thomasson, Roger Tsai, Diana Lee, Conna McCarthy, Annie Horton, Michele Kwok, Tara Boris, Ina Kim, Amy Gurvitz, Anne Hawkins, Caroline Davis, Dana Lung, Mia Tindle, Cortney Allen and Lara Dickinson.

Meeting called to order at 7:12 pm

Approval of Minutes

- Laura opened the floor for discussion of the September 21st meeting minutes – no further discussion
- Motion to approve: Dana Lung
- Motion seconded: Mia Tindle
- All Board members were in favor. No objections.
- Minutes approved.

President's Report: Laura Amen

- Thank you to all the volunteers who helped with the Great Shake Out and Shoo the Flu.
- Minted promo code is FUNDRAISEHAVENS – you save 15% and Minted donates 15% to Havens. Please spread the word to friends and family members.
- We have some open positions and need help filling them: Scrip and Treasurer Elect. Both positions are flexible and can be done primarily on your own schedule (e.g. from home in the evenings).

Giving Campaign: Mia Tindle

- We are off to a strong start, we have already raised 50% of our \$2.5 million target. Haven's in particular is doing well.
- Volunteers are needed for lawn sign delivery from November 8th – 12th and text bank night on November 8th from 6-8pm.
- Our HPC Board is in first place for donations among the three elementary schools.

Emergency Prep/Safety: Amy Gurvitz

- The Great Shake Out was extremely organized and went well.
- Parents please make sure your kids know who is on your emergency contact list. In case of a real emergency, it is critical they know who is approved to pick them up to avoid confusion and angst.

Lunch Activities Chair: Lara Dickinson

- If you enjoy art of science, volunteers are needed for lunchtime activities. Or, if you know teachers who may be interested, please reach out them as well or send their name to Lara.

Book Fair: Laura Amen

- Book Fair will be Nov 7-9th. The schedule has changed a bit from past years due to voting.
- Wednesday evening there will be a second food truck to minimize waits.
- There will also be a bake sale Wednesday night. Volunteers are needed to make goodies for and work the bake sale table.

School Board Candidate Forum: Opening Statements

Hari Titan:

- Has lived in Piedmont since 2008. His daughter started kindergarten at Havens in 2010, his son was in high school. He has had children at Piedmont elementary, middle and high schools.
- Has a Masters in math and PhD in Computer Science. Has a good pulse on the high tech economy in the Bay Area.
- Has been a volunteer cost benefit analyst since 2013, including for the for Alan Harvey Theater. He's interested in STEM education.
- Helped promote full day kindergarten.
- Went deep into school financing and promoted a pay as you go system of financing that saved the district a good amount of money.

Julie Caskey

- Is the only elementary school parent running. She also has children in middle and high schools. Has a long history of volunteer experience in Piedmont working with various stakeholders.
- Is the only candidate who has gone through many of the many instructional changes that have rolled out in recent years.
- Has a student first philosophy but also believes in engaging with all stakeholders.
- Has 20 years of legal experience. Is a lifelong public servant.
- Has four children in Piedmont schools. Sees each child as an individual – believes we need an educational program that speaks to each individual child.

Amal Smith

- Is running for reelection. Moved to Piedmont in 1998. Has been through the educational experience twice. Both children are now in college.
- Has 24 years in higher education including reporting, financial management, and financial operations support.
- Has 18 years of volunteer experience in Piedmont in a large variety of leadership roles.
- Values engaging stakeholders.

- Priorities: Broad K-12 education for all students, attracting and retaining quality teachers. Values innovation and curiosity.

Megan Pillsbury:

- Has three children. All three went through Havens, PMS and PHS.
- Volunteered at Havens when her children were young. She then went back to school to become a teacher and taught at Havens and then Wildwood. Was active in many committees while teaching. Retired four years ago, stayed active as a substitute.
- Worked at Lawrence Hall of Science for the past two years in various educational roles.

School Board Candidate Forum Prepared Questions: Debate Moderated by PHS Student Anna Fehr

Question 1: How do you view the role of the School Board versus Superintendent versus School Site Leadership?

- **Megan:** Board is responsible for holding the Superintendent responsible and accountable.
- **Amal:** Roles are similar. There are times when you have to be a leader and there are times when you have to be a manager. It is collaborative. Even when there are disagreements, there is a focus on what the students and community need. Disagreements occur but it is important that these disagreements are handled respectfully and collaboratively.
- **Julie:** It is important they all work collaboratively. Julie has served on the PHS Site Council and in that role has worked with the past two PHS principals. She brings a fresh approach to the role. Wants to look at how we can do things differently.
- **Hari:** Key factor to consider is that the Board is elected by voters, the Superintendent and principals are not. Voters determine the composition of the Board – what are the strengths and what are the weaknesses of the Board and its current members? Who can we elect to help improve where there are weaknesses?

Question 2: What do you see as the biggest crisis facing our schools now and what do you suggest we do about it?

- **Hari:** Teacher shortage is an issue. The bigger issue is that we are deficit spending each year and our reserves are going to run out. The state is increasing our district obligation to pay teacher pensions. To solve it we need to look at the education code and do financial analysis.
- **Julie:** We are facing many of the same issues as other districts. Procedurally, we need to improve communications between parents, school leadership and teachers, especially in the secondary schools. That involves changing culture. Substantively, the major issue is financial. How do we pay teachers better? Finally, how do we improve the culture in middle and high school?
- **Amal:** Ultimately, we need a solution from the state to solve the financial issues the district is facing. But, we also need to look at our parcel tax. The Board is currently considering an additional parcel tax to cover deficits. Additionally, we also need to look

at how we can improve teacher retention, particularly in the high school. Finally, communications need to be improved.

- **Megan:** The budget deficit and teacher retention are the two most important issues. We need to find non-monetary ways to incentivize teachers and improve retention. We should engage teachers, encourage them to innovate, and give them more autonomy in the classroom. Putting a past teacher on the Board would help to give teachers confidence that the Board understands their needs.

Question 3: What qualities do you want each student to graduate high school with?

- **Megan:** Wants students to have the joy of learning. Doesn't want them to get burned out. Wants them to take the solid education, both liberal arts and STEAM, we give them and use that to be responsible citizens. Wants them to be problem-solvers and be well-prepared to be life-long learners.
- **Amal:** Wants students to have the capacity to remain intellectually curious, to be good citizens, and to have an internal compass.
- **Julie:** Wants to provide each child with a love of learning and find what really speaks to them. Feels the school values really reflect what she, and the community as a whole, wants for our kids.
- **Hari:** Schools have been transitioning to Common Core Standards which is a good thing. Consistent with Common Core, Hari agrees we need to focus on analytical and critical thinking skills. We don't want rote learners, we want students to understand fact versus fiction. This will help them as citizens and future voters. He also feels it is important we have classes that allow children to discover and pursue their passions.

School Board Candidate Forum Audience Questions

Question 1: Please give specifics how to you implement one of your priorities (priority was selected by the questioner).

- **Hari:** Transparency
 - Would create an online forum where parents can participate in committees at their convenience. Currently committees are too small, and people feel left out. Online committees would allow for more people to participate, particularly those that work full-time and are not able to participate in other ways.
- **Julie:** Engagement
 - We currently have a lot of mechanisms for people to participate. However, In addition to online surveys, we need to give people meaningful ways to participate. We need to start with a longer-term look at changes we want to make. We should give stakeholders an opportunity to participate at the beginning and throughout the process. We need to ensure feedback is actually taken into account.
- **Amal:** Teacher Evaluation
 - This isn't a top priority for Amal. The Board and teachers collaborate on how to evaluate teachers and it has been successful. It is a negotiated item. There are processes by which evaluations occur. There is room for refinement. We need to

help train the evaluators. And, we need provide candid feedback and constructive criticism. When necessary, we need to set improvement goals and a timeline to meet them.

- **Megan:** Programs that help build respectful citizens
 - We need to help children understand their privilege while not making them feel guilty about it. We need to encourage them to be good citizens through programs like Teaching Tolerance, Let's Talk, etc.

Question 2: Recently there has been a priority placed on social justice and inclusion. How would you help move this forward?

- **Megan:** Would support literature and programs that foster inclusion and tolerance. Would encourage programs that have already been put into place – Teaching Tolerance, Let's Talk, etc.
- **Amal:** Feels that we need to work as a community, both and home and in schools, to focus on social justice, inclusion and equity. We have to teach by example. We have to repeat our priorities, so our children know what is right when faced with tough decisions or circumstances.
- **Julie:** Has significant experience working on and promoting social justice. Serves on PADC. Helped to fund and promote Let's Talk.
- **Hari:** If appreciating diversity becomes an optional activity, it attracts people who already appreciate diversity. It should become part of our curriculum. While cultural diversity is part of our curriculum, we should expand it. We should help our kids make friends with kids from other backgrounds.

Question 3: The most divisive issues seem to be how personnel issues were handled. What experience do you bring in personnel management and leadership?

- **Hari:** With respect to the high school history teacher, we should have negotiated with the unions to make clear this behavior wasn't acceptable. We need to set a harassment policy that the unions are in agreement with. We should play tough to ensure issues are resolved quickly.
- **Julie:** Has had a lengthy career in the legal system representing people and negotiating outcomes as a trial lawyer. Has worked in legal proceedings where different stakeholders have very different needs and desires. Her legal experience would be a bonus because it would help with these sorts of matters.
- **Amal:** Her experience in the last four years has given her great insight. Has worked on policies that clarify expectations regarding harassment, bullying, etc. Has represented personnel so she understands HR and Ed Code requirements.
- **Megan:** Having been a teacher she knows how to get teacher and principal support. Has worked alongside other teachers when they are struggling. It is hard for a principal to find time observe each classroom to oversee what is going on, but this is essential.

Meeting adjourned at 8:33 pm.