

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: School Board Member Evelyn Greer said the Board has just approved the beginning of construction of a reliever school for PHS. The school will be at 86th St. and SW 107th Ave. and should open by August 2010. It will relieve Killian and PHS (PHS's student population should drop to 2,750). This area of town is the most overcrowded. 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.

Ms. Greer requested a plan be developed, like the overcrowding plan, to specify where we should build now and for future development, including an equitable distribute of special programs. All of the MAST, DASH, and New World Schools were developed downtown which made access for South Dade students difficult. As a result of the new plan, more 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. A Fine Arts school is planned on SW 216th St. where the County is building a Fine Arts center. Commissioners Katy Sorensen and Dennis Moss support it and want it to be like New World School of the Arts. In the old Homestead Hospital, a Medical Arts magnet high school is planned in partnership with Baptist Hospital.

In August 2008, South Dade Senior High School should open and students from F.C. Martin will be able to go there instead of to Coral Reef High. 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 but it was done away with. 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.

The State anticipates that next year's budget short fall will be \$200 million, so everything that is not "core" is on the table. The School Board cannot have a budget deficit and cannot borrow money to fund a deficit. She encouraged us to be as active as possible with the State Legislature. 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 wouldn't be hurt. But now, they have not kept their promises. When school personnel are cut, it will impact students. Florida per student funding is ranked 50th in the USA. After the budget cuts, we will be 53rd.

Question and Answer Period: Questions included: *How is PHS's population going to be reduced by 700 students? How is it possible to build all these schools with budget cuts? How can we close schools and justify building new ones? Why can't we fund all the schools equally? What about the proposed reduction in our property taxes and the penny sales tax issue?* **[See Summary Minutes on the PTSA Website (palmettoptsa.org) to view responses.]** Contact her by email if you have questions (evelyngreer@greerco.com) or you can reach her through Riva Steinman.

Treasurer's Report: The only significant change was that Special Projects are delineated at \$25,000 which we approved a couple of meetings ago.

Old Business:

Taste of Pinecrest: Approximately 6,800 people attended; but, because of 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: Volunteers are needed on March 26th as chaperones for the Senior Picnic. Contact Angie Lima at afflima@dadeschools.net. Mary Steele asks that you fill out the volunteer hours form and get it to her at Mes6841@hotmail.com.

End of Year Staff Luncheon: The luncheon is scheduled for June 4th. Lauren Mayer and Debbie Lichtner need volunteers to help set up, serve, and bring desserts. Contact them at laurenmayer@bellsouth.net or slichtner1@bellsouth.net to help. **[NOTE: Luncheon rescheduled to Tuesday, June 3rd.]**

Student Council Representative: Mansi Baid announced that chaperones are needed for the Senior Picnic on March 26th and prom tickets are on sale through March 28th. Student Council elections are March 27th and graduation is June 6th (each student gets 6 tickets).

Legislative: Chair Jennifer Wollmann felt Ms. Greer covered all pending issues.

Principal's Report: Principal Weiner thanked Ms. Greer for the magnificent job she did at the last School Board meeting where her presentation swayed the Board to allow schools to hold on to their discretionary accounts. The Board has adopted a new Code of Student Contact which is available online. Students will take home a letter containing an overview of the new Code and website information. We have 2 Intel Science Award semi-finalists: 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.

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 but Ms. Greer told him that summer school is "on the table" now. 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. would be offered in summer school. The Night School Principal, Dr. Edward Gehret, has had his funding slashed. After spring break, he will talk to Dr. Gehret about it and will let us know once he hears something. Mr. Weiner thanked the PTSA for funding the t-shirts for Plant the Pride. Over 500 students and teachers volunteered and their energy and dedication was phenomenal. The commitment and pride that teachers and kids have never ceases to amaze him.

Nomination Slate: Only one Executive Board position is open (Corresponding Sec.) along with a few other positions. The election will be at our next meeting including nominations from the floor.

Announcements: Media Specialist Dian Adjamah made a presentation about the "Spring Reading Rap Session" program which encourages kids to do recreational reading. She asked parents to send in baked goods and/or \$10 gift cards to Starbucks, Quiznos, McDonalds, etc. The grand prize is an i-pod from the Rotary. For more information, call the Media Center at ext. 2259 or send an e-mail to dadjamah@dadeschools.net. Our next meeting is April 16th in the Media Center. Teacher of the Year, Terri Ortiz, will be our guest speaker.

Miscellaneous: Cheerleading Booster Club representatives, Carol Maggiore and Jackie Reese, asked about requesting funds from the PTSA for help in buying new uniforms. Members were concerned about setting a precedent and the Executive Board will discuss it further.

Approve Minutes: The minutes of the February 20, 2008, General Membership Meeting were presented and modified to correct the spelling of EESAC. Nancy Harter made a motion to approve the minutes which 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

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