

Shepherd Elementary PTO 2018–2019

- Membership meeting for Wednesday, November 14, 2018

Attendees

- Liz Bradley (President)
- Allison Berg (1st Vice President)
- Taryn Losch-Beridon (2nd Vice President, elected at meeting)
- Andrea Smith (Treasurer)
- *vacant* (Assistant Treasurer)
- Theo Francis (Recording Secretary)
- Jade Brawley (SES Principal)
- about 25 attendees total

Agenda

- Welcome/call meeting to order — Liz
- Sept Minutes approval — Theo
- Budget update and approval — Andrea
- Current year highlights & requests
- Fall Fest update — Liz and Ayana
- Fundraising plans and opportunities — Taryn
- PTA survey results — Liz/Michelle Musgrove
- Committee updates
- PTA elections — VP and assistant treasurer — Liz
- Looking for help: Gala planning committee recruitment
- Close the meeting — Liz and Theo

Meeting Notes

Meeting was called to order at 6:39 PM

Mr. Francis presented the minutes from the September meeting, which had been distributed before the meeting, without summary. A motion to approve was made and seconded and approved by unanimous voice vote.

Mr. Francis presented the audit committee report presented, which had been distributed before the meeting and discussed at the September meeting, without summary. A motion to approve was made and seconded and approved by unanimous voice vote.

Ms. Smith presented the Treasurer's financial report and budget for the 2018–2019 school year. She proposed that \$10,000 that has been earmarked for school laptops for several years should be reallocated to stock classroom libraries; using outside funds to purchase laptops approved by DCPS procedures has proved cumbersome, and the school no longer needs the laptops. The motion was seconded and approved with a unanimous voice vote.

Ms. Bradley discussed the Teacher Assistance Fund, which has \$4,000 allocated, to be distributed based on quarterly applications from teachers. The next deadline is Dec. 15. The PTO has funded two field trips and is arranging to fund others for teachers.

Ms. Bradley said this year's Fall Fest exceeded goals, raising close to \$17,800 and netting about \$11,000. The PTO is renewing efforts to raise funds through box-top donations, Amazon Smile, Primary.com, Flipgive, a Lynch Creek Farms fundraiser, and more sales of shirts, sweatshirts and other Shepherd-branded gear. Restaurant nights are coming soon.

She said the gala is planned for the evening of Saturday, April 27. A parents' night out, with childcare provided at the school, is scheduled for Friday, December 7.

Ms. Bradley emphasized the school and PTO's efforts at communication, including Principal Brawley's Sunday evening email and the PTO's Wednesday email, along with Facebook posts. Mr. Francis encouraged parents to sign up for the PTO's AtoZ Connect app, which is being used for the school directory as well as electronic communication.

Ms. Bradley discussed the decision to apply \$10,000 raised at the 2016 gala and originally earmarked for school laptops to classroom libraries instead. Because of DCPS red tape, it wasn't possible to use the money for laptops, and Principal Brawley was able to secure enough laptops through the District. The classroom library funding would focus on kindergarten through fifth grade.

Principal Brawley said the classroom libraries are intended for students to use when they are reading in class, including after completing assignments while other students are still working.

A parent asked whether the classroom libraries would duplicate resources at the school library. Principal Brawley explained that efforts would be made to ensure there isn't duplication. A parent asked how the books would be categorized by grade level; Ms. Bradley said the purchase would go through a company that provides categorized grade-level-appropriate books to schools.

A motion was made and seconded to reallocate the funds in question for classroom libraries. The motion was approved unanimously by a voice vote.

Ms. Bradley noted that DCPS would be holding a budget hearing on December 12 and urged parents and others to attend to support Shepherd's funding needs. She noted that within the district and the city, Shepherd has a reputation for talking but not showing up.

Ms. Smith recommended advocating for a dean of students position at the school to help support the principal and faculty on working with students beyond academics.

Ms. Bradley gave a report on Fall Fest: The event cost about \$6,000 and raised about \$17,000. She said room-parent coordination was excellent, and the event organizers made it a success by keeping arrangements simple and cost-effective, and raising money without nickle-and-dime parents. She said more than 65 families responded to requests for pre-event sponsorships, raising about \$6,500 before the event occurred, enough to cover costs. In addition, the dunk tank – which featured Principal Brawley and Messrs. Spriggs, Garner and Clayborn – was a big success.

Fundraising chair Taryn Losch-Beridon outlined a series of existing and new fundraising efforts, including (details also at <https://www.shepherd-elementary.org/support-us/>)

- [Amazon Smile](#) — details on the Shopping for Shepherd page of www.shepherd-elementary.org
- [Primary.com](#) — supplier of basic color clothes (uniforms), gives back a percentage of every sale. Code for current additional discounts (through Thanksgiving): *schoolthanks*
- [FlipGive](#) — offers a browser utility that allows you to direct between 1% and 8% of purchases to the school at 400 online merchants, including major brands
- [Shutterfly](#) — funding for Shepherd with purchases — 13% to Shepherd through the end of the year and 10% back through 2019
- [Lynch Creek Farms](#) — holiday wreaths and decorations — buy for your home or send as gifts; delivery can be scheduled for future shipment

Ms. Losch-Beridon also noted that the PTA is halfway to its 180 Fund goal, and plans to make a push before the end of 2018 to benefit from employer matching contributions and donor tax deductions.

In addition, the PTO has begun movie nights at school and plans restaurant nights at local restaurants. The PTO purchased a site license for showing movies, which is available for any showing at the school, whether by the PTO, the school itself or other groups. (Many but not all movies are covered — contact info@shepherd-elementary.org for more information.)

- Restaurant nights will likely be scheduled for the first and/or third Tuesday of each month. Participating restaurants will donate a portion of each purchase to the school for customers who mention Shepherd. The first restaurant night will take place on December 4th at Potbelly's in Silver Spring.
- A Parents Night Out is scheduled for Dec. 7 — drop your kids off at Shepherd for childcare by Star Achievers and have an evening out.
- A Paint 'n' Sip event with Mr. Garner is scheduled for Nov. 30. The first Paint 'n' Sip, last year, filled up quickly.

Ms. Losch-Beridon said the PTO is looking for volunteers for a variety of efforts, and encouraged parents to donate time to help with at least one event this school year.

She noted that the annual spring gala is tentatively being planned for Saturday, April 27. No venue has been chosen yet. Those interested in joining the gala planning committee should contact Ms. Losch-Beridon or info@shepherd-elementary.org.

Michelle Musgrove gave a presentation on the PTO parent survey (included with meeting materials on <https://www.shepherd-elementary.org/parents/parent-teacher-association-pta/>). Ninety-five parents responded out of a student base of 380, making the results statistically significant.

A parent raised concerns that the school needs a science teacher, and suggested the PTA might be able to help with hiring additional staff.

Mr. Francis noted that the PTO grossed around \$50,000 last year, too little for even a single full-time staffer if the funds were spent on nothing else.

Ms. Bradley introduced the heads of the parent advocacy committee. Ms. Crawford said the committee hopes to avoid further surprises in the matter of Mr. Gonzalez's arrest and prosecution; no trial date has been scheduled, but the committee hopes to be able to notify the community well in advance, in case media attention returns to the school.

In addition, Ms. Crawford noted that the committee has met with Ms. Brawley about the DC Parks & Recreation Department's plan for a recreation center attached to the school. She stressed the importance of parental involvement in monitoring the design and plans for staffing and security, throughout the process and once the facility is open.

Simon Messing, who has served on the Shepherd School Improvement Team, said that DPR is not under any obligation to meet with parents, meaning it will be up to the Shepherd Community to make its wants and needs known, and to enlist the help of city elected officials to ensure we are heard.

A parent expressed concern that the design appears more oriented toward public use, though it can benefit students.

Mr. Messing noted school officials are aware of that. He also noted that the current gym / multi-purpose room isn't part of the new facility because securing it would be difficult given its placement in the middle of the school. He said the current design calls for one set of double doors connecting the facility to the school, which will lock at 6:30 pm. However, it will be critical to ensure that Star Achievers and the school are granted exclusive use of the facility not only during school hours but also during after-care hours. Because Star Achievers is an independent nonprofit, rather than a school program, this isn't a given.

Ms. Crawford noted that there will be two hearings of importance to the school. The Dec. 12 DCPS hearing and a later, city hearing in the spring that will have more bearing on the final funding decisions. Parents at Janney, Murch and Lafayette all show up, and Shepherd should ensure it doesn't lose resources to more vocal schools.

An attendee asked if anyone is reaching out to Shepherd neighborhood residents who don't currently have children at the school. Ms. Bradley said she would talk with the Shepherd Park Citizens Association, which has kept tabs on the hearings, and can communicate to the neighborhood at large.

Attendees discussed the school's International Baccalaureate focus, and several expressed concern that the IB mission and approach isn't always clear. One said other IB schools seem to operate differently. Several asked that the school send someone knowledgeable about IB to PTO meetings. Ms. Crawford suggested pursuing two tracks on the school's IB status: clarifying for parents what it means and how the school is currently implementing it, and also improving the school's approach.

Ms. Crawford said she has been investigating how to get city or DCPS groundskeepers to clear weeds and overgrowth near the back fence. An attendee explained that the city Department of General Services no longer has that responsibility, which falls to the Department of Public Works' solid-waste management unit.

Another attendee said the bathroom in the office area doesn't lock. Another attendee said the city's vendors must fix within a certain number of days of a formal request, based on the "SLA date".

Other attendees expressed concern about water-fountain water pressure and germs, and about cleanliness and an overpowering smell in a boys' bathroom at the school. Ms. Washington said the school has only three custodians, whereas a full complement would be four, meaning the current staff is overworked. She stressed that Ward 4, like most other wards in the city, must compete with charter schools for funding.

An attendee expressed concern that the school still lacks a full-time spanish teacher, and asked whether there would be a no-school camp at Shepherd during the new February break. Ms. Bradley said Star Achievers would know.

Ms. Bradley called for volunteers for had two PTO board vacancies, for assistant treasurer and for second vice-president. No one volunteered for assistant treasurer. Ms. Losch-Beridon volunteered for vice president and briefly introduced herself. With no other candidates, Ms. Losch-Beridon was elected second vice president by unanimous voice vote.

Ms. Bradley urged parents and teachers to sign up for the spring gala committee.

A motion for adjournment was made, seconded and carried by unanimous voice vote at 8:09 p.m.