

# Shepherd Elementary PTO 2018–2019

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- Membership meeting for Wednesday, December 19, 2018

## Attendees

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- Liz Bradley (President)
- Taryn Losch-Beridon (1st Vice President)
- Allison Berg (2nd Vice President)
- Andrea Smith (Treasurer)
- vacant (Assistant Treasurer)
- Karen Sloan (Corresponding Secretary) [[late]]
- Theo Francis (Recording Secretary) [[late]]
- Jade Brawley (SES Principal)
- about 20 people total

## Agenda

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## Meeting Notes

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The meeting was called to order on December 19, 2018 at about 6:45 PM.

Ms. Smith presented the budget and PTA finances to date.

Mr. Francis distributed copies of the November minutes. A motion to adopt the minutes was made, seconded and passed by unanimous voice vote.

Ms. Bradley and Meghan Mountford, a member of Parents Amplifying Voices in Education, a parent-advocacy group, discussed PAVE's priorities, as determined by parents, including budget transparency, funding for trauma and social-emotional training and mental health. Ms. Mountford explained the makeup and process for the organization and invited all DC parents to a mid-May parent summit.

Ms. Bradley discussed the District's budget forum, which focused on understanding the budget process more than making requests. The meeting also covered the Local School Advisory Teams, which assist principals in determining budget priorities.

Ms. Bradley suggested the PTA and school make budget requests in three main areas. She noted that the school has 382 students, which is almost but not quite at the 400-student threshold for receiving DCPS funding for an assistant principal. The school is not projected to grow much next year. She suggested seeking an assistant principal with expertise in math, which is where the school can improve the most on test scores. The assistant principal could also help with teacher training, parent management and other functions. To hire an assistant principal without reaching 400 students, the school would have to reallocate most of the necessary funds from other areas.

An attendee noted that recruiting teachers and assistant principals is a long process.

Ms. Bradley said hearings would be held in January or February, with funding decisions made in March. She said her understanding is that, with 400 students, the school is responsible for some of the cost out of its standard budget, but the District pays most of the cost; under 400, most of the cost is borne out of the school's standard budget.

Ms. Bradley suggested a second priority is the planned community center that would also function as a gym and cafeteria for the school during the school day. She said the Department of Public Works was supposed to have awarded to the project, but had not done so yet. If construction were to begin this summer, it would not likely be finished by the new school year, raising concerns about construction workers on site, environmental (noise, air quality) issues, etc.

She suggested social-emotional training as the third area of focus.

The attendees discussed these and other priority options. An attendee pointed out that the problem replacing the school's Spanish teacher is one of recruiting rather than funding.

Ms. Bradley said a change in DCPS hiring policy would allow the school to hire a Spanish teacher for the remainder of the year without locking the school in to keeping that teacher indefinitely, which could speed hiring.

An attendee asked about replacing the school's music teacher. Ms. Bradley said a replacement had been selected and would start full-time in January.

An attendee asked about funding for teacher classroom needs. Ms. Bradley said the DCPS school budget would never be able to provide everything teachers need, and noted that the PTA is providing \$1,000 a quarter to teachers through a quarterly request process. She said it's unfortunate that some of these requests are for paper, wipes and other basic supplies that the District should be providing.

Ms. Bradley proposed that the PTA recommend as school budget priorities an assistant principal, social-emotional training and safety and security, especially in light of the planned community center.

An attendee asked about reaching out to the International Baccalaureate organization for guidance regarding the curriculum, training, etc., given that its headquarters is in the area. Ms. Bradley noted that DCPS has a new IB director in charge of helping make IB schools more consistent across the District. She noted that the school will be holding IB nights in January to help parents understand Shepherd's status as an IB school.

An attendee asked about school security once the community center opens, and raised the need for an improved alarm system and better locks on exterior doors.

Simon Messing, a former member of the school's SIT committee, said summer stabilization funds might be available for some kinds of improvements.

An attendee said DPR hadn't responded to concerns voiced about the project, and recommended that parents and community members check in as often as possible, especially because promises can be forgotten once construction begins.

Mr. Francis recommended that the PTA establish its a committee to monitor the process. Mr. Messing recommended enlisting ANC Member Stacey Lincoln, since items on the ANC's agenda go to the DC Council.

An attendee asked if it would be possible to reject the DPR community center and get funding for a school-only facility through DCPS. Mr. Francis noted that Mayor Bowser has described the community center approach as the city's solution for the school's gym and cafeteria needs, and that succeeding in rejecting the approach would likely mean losing the

improvements altogether.

Principal Brawley and Mr. Messing explained the history of the unfinished prior DCPS renovation, and said the existing community-center approach was proposed as a replacement.

Principal Brawley said she met with the person overseeing the project from DCPS, and said the Department of General Services contracting and procurement arm is in the process of getting award letter, which is likely to be complete by the end of the year. Once awarded, there would be a community meeting to introduce the design-build team. Bidders came to inspect the building in October. When DGS issues the award letter, it will notify DCPS and DPR, because it's a DPR project. In response to questions, she noted that the existing gym would remain an auditorium, and the space would be redone as part of the larger project. She said the school has been guaranteed that it would have priority for the new community center facilities during school hours, and that she is determined to ensure that outsiders will not have access to students or to the facility during the school day. She said multiple security measures have been proposed. Other measures will need to be taken during the construction process, which could also disrupt existing drop-off and pick-up processes.

Mr. Messing stressed the importance of ensuring that Star Achievers aftercare has proper access to the new facility. Ms. Brawley said she has informed DPR that the school day lasts from 8 am to 6 pm. In response to a question, Principal Brawley said the new facility will have a full kitchen, not just the existing warming kitchen.

Ms. Bradley said the PTA and school community will have to coordinate to stay on top of the process.

Principal Brawley shared the results of the school's official report card from the District Office of the State Superintendent of Education, which gave it four out of five possible stars. The school was evaluated in academic proficiency, academic growth and attendance, but not English as a Second Language because its ESL population is too small. She noted that the framework, which is from OSSE and not DCPS, is very new and covers both neighborhood and charter schools. Shepherd hasn't yet made any changes based on its star rating. She said Shepherd's goals remain to increase the number of students performing at levels 4 and 5 on PARCC tests administered to third through fifth graders; other tests and assessments don't count for the star rating. She noted that the number of students scoring 4 (on grade level) or 5 (exceeds grade level) on English and language-arts has risen 8% over four years, while the number doing so in math has risen 10% over four years. She said she expects the steady increase to continue. In addition, Principal Brawley said her goal is to reduce the number of students scoring 1 and 2 (which indicate not meeting grade level), figures that haven't changed much in recent years, at about 9% to 10% scoring a 1 and about the same scoring a 2. Attendance rates are high and not a concern.

Principal Brawley said school enrollment is 380, with next year's goal set at 382.

An attendee asked about spare capacity. Ms. Brawley went over this history of the school's two "bubble" years, with three classrooms of what is now second and third grades and two for other grades. She said when each of those two years move on to middle school, the school is likely to add a class to an incoming grade. However, currently the school doesn't have enough space to add another full classroom of students. The only vacant classroom is in the basement by the current cafeteria.

In response to a question, Principal Brawley noted that the school must accept all in-boundary students, and any remaining spots can go to out-of-boundary students. The school always has 32 pre-K 3 slots, plus eight additional pre-K 4 slots because class sizes rise.

In response to a question, Principal Brawley said the school report card stars influence funding in that 1-star schools receive additional money.

In response to a question, Principal Brawley said she hopes to improve test scores in several ways, including having teachers work with fourth graders in the morning before school or in the afternoon after school.

In response to a question about the new chancellor emphasizing more decision-making power for principals, Principal Brawley said she hopes to strengthen the school's IB program, in part with training for teachers, and allocate funds for more academic and other programs benefitting students.

An attendee said it could be helpful to add teachers aides. Another attendee asked how giving principals additional autonomy would differ from the current situation. Principal Brawley said when she started at the school, funds for the school's IB program were part of the central office budget; now they are part of the school's budget. The new system would allow her to make more decisions about where and how school funds are used.

Ms. Losch-Beridon gave a brief update on planning for the annual spring gala fundraiser. She said Lowell School's gala was scheduled for the night the PTA was originally targeting, so options include May 3 or 4. A small group of volunteers is looking at venues as well as online auction vendors, and more information will be available at the January meeting. She asked for anyone interested in helping to get in touch.

Ms. Losch-Beridon also noted that Shepherd restaurant nights would be at Chipotle on Jan. 15, a movie night would be held Jan. 11.

Ms. Berg noted that the second annual summer camp expo would be held from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. on Wednesday, Jan. 16, before and during the beginning of the January PTA meeting. A number of camps would have information available, sometimes with on-the-spot registration or discounts. Participating camps will also be asked to provide gift certificates to auction during the gala.

Ms. Bradley said the school would receive classroom library books purchased by the PTA through Booksource, as discussed at the prior meeting. The books will belong to the school, in K-5 classrooms.

She noted that Shepherd Jazz Night, a longstanding community tradition founded and run by Dr. Michael Wallace, would be held March 1 at the school, including a potluck and live jazz from one or more local bands. She asked for volunteers to help Dr. Wallace with the event.

Ms. Bradley noted that Shepherd's reputation in official circles in Washington is that parents don't show up to support the school's requests, and urged parents and the community to become more involved.

An attendee said more parents should attend meetings. Mr. Francis encouraged attendees to bring another parent to the next meeting. Ms. Berg suggested that room parents could remind parents of meetings.

A motion to adjourn was made, seconded and adopted by unanimous voice vote at 8:06 PM.