

ARLINGTON COUNTY COUNCIL OF PTAs (CCPTA)

February 27, 2017 Minutes

Chris Ditta opened the meeting at 7:06 pm at the Ed Center. The usual introductions were skipped due to the full agenda.

Doug Ullman, Jr., staff member, and Louisa Marshall, a student from Washington-Lee High School, both representing Encore Stage and Studio, entertained the attendees by performing a song from the musical “Godspell”, which will be performed from 31 March – 9 April at the Gunston Arts Center-Theatre Two. They received a loud round of applause. Encore Stage, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary, is “theater by kids, for kids”, that encourages students to explore and develop their skills.

Chris noted that each month he and the chairs of the School Board advisory groups (ACI, FAC, etc.) meet with the Superintendent to discuss issues of concern.

Lisa Sockett, of behalf of Debbie Kilpatrick, Northern Virginia PTA Council, announced that the District Annual Awards Dinner will be held on 30 March at Annandale High School. Also, on 9 March there will be a group visit to Capitol Hill. Lisa will forward additional information via the CCPTA e-mail address.

Chris noted that Lisa is accepting nominations to serve on next year’s CCPTA Executive Board. Several positions will be open, and nominations are welcome.

Liaison Reports

In a change from the normal order of business, Chris moved the liaison officer reports to the start of the agenda, to give them more time to report than usual.

SEPTA: Caroline Levy discussed some of the issues of continuing concern to the families of children with special needs. She noted that SEPTA meets monthly at the Syphax Center in South Arlington. Some of the parents will relate personal stories at the next meeting. Caroline also briefly discussed current progress in autism research and increasing emphasis among SEPTA families for greater inclusion, with their special needs children integrated into normal classrooms. She then outlined some programs coming up, including “Magic Paintbrush” at the Thomas Jefferson Community Center. These programs welcome all participants.

FAC: Lois Koontz noted the ongoing work to add an estimated additional 1,300 seats for secondary students. The FAC working group she chairs recently published a 37-page report on this issue—copies can be obtained from Lois. Although the FAC and other groups continue to look at many sites within the county for school construction, none are perfect—a reality she says that everyone needs to come to grips with. With input

from CCPTA rep Laura Simpson, who also serves on the FAC, Lois briefly discussed the upcoming series of public forums. Lois and Laura then answered numerous questions from the CCPTA members.

BAC: No report.

ACI: No report.

Encore Stage

Sara Stehle Duke, Executive Director of Encore Stage and Studio, whose representatives had opened the meeting, discussed Encore's programs serving Arlington and Northern Virginia families. Their goal, to introduce children to live theater, is served through eight productions a year, a summer camp, and various enrichment programs.

Chris asked the CCPTA members to briefly discuss the ways in which they channel information from the meeting back to their schools. Most send their personal meeting notes to their PTA President, with some of the information then making its way into PTA newsletters and e-mail "blasts".

Arlington Partnership for Children, Youth and Families

Michael Swisher of the Arlington Partnership for Children, Youth and Families discussed the various programs supported by his County-funded group. Their current focus is on "parents sharing wisdom with other parents", particularly during the week of "sharing wisdom" from March 18-26, 2017. He is encouraging parents to gather in small groups whether at the school or with parents of their children's friends to explore challenges they are facing, and offer support and suggestions. He offered discussion guides for more structured events or topics to generate conversation. If you or your PTA wants to organize a gathering like that but are uncomfortable guiding a discussion, the Partnership will provide a discussion facilitator. They can also help secure spaces at schools or libraries if you cannot host the program at your home.

Superintendents News and Highlights

Dr. Murphy and Lisa Stengel gave updates on the 3-5 year plan, the budget and the new Engage page of the APS website that offers vehicles of input across issues.

Dr. Murphy discussed the repurposing of Drew Model School following the opening of a new elementary school on the Thomas Jefferson Middle School site. He also spent some time discussing the new high school projected to be built "somewhere" in the county, and the enrollment projections propelling the effort.

Dr. Murphy provided some long-term ideas of all the additional schools that may be needed if the projection for a total of 40,000 students holds true.

Lisa Stengle provided an update on the enrollments and transfer policy within APS, and noted a new policy (25.2) proposed for School Year 2018-19. Citizens are encouraged to “join the review and help shape the revisions” by visiting www.apsva.us/engage. They may also wish to attend community meetings at 7pm on 30 March (at Wakefield High School) and on 4 April (at Yorktown High School).

Dr. Murphy noted that APS has hired an outside consultant to review the projections developed by APS staff. In response to a question, he confirmed that hiring a consultant was due to public concern about the validity of the projections.

In response to a question, Dr. Murphy confirmed that the relocatable classrooms would continue to be needed for the foreseeable future; rather than removing them, APS just purchased several more. He also mentioned that the proposed School Budget has a gap of \$14 million. APS and the School Board are continuing to work with County Management and the County Board on ways to resolve this gap.

School Board Report

Tannia Tolento attended the meeting on behalf of the School Board. She urged the CCPTA members, and the larger Arlington community, to continue to be sensitive when discussing diversity issues. She is passionate about the need to pull together the community. She also strongly urged folks to tell her and the School Board “what they are thinking”.

Other and New Business

CCPTA Treasurer Linley Mancilla asked that the audit report be approved, which was done by a voice vote with no objections.

A few representatives briefly discussed the plan to introduce block scheduling at Williamsburg Middle School, which has run into some community opposition.

Mahender Dudani noted that he is on a committee to determine a name to propose to the School Board for the new elementary school planned for the Thomas Jefferson Middle School site.