

Laurel Ridge Elementary PTA General Meeting Minutes

NOVEMBER 10, 2020 / 6:30 PM / Via Google Meet (due to COVID-19 pandemic)

Call to Order, Welcome and Housekeeping

Call to Order

- Maria Davila called the meeting to order at 6:35 pm.
- A quorum was established.

Reminders and Housekeeping

- Meeting is being recorded
- Please mute yourself
- Stick to Agenda

Approval of Past Minutes

- Corny Delasalas moved to approve the minutes of the last meeting (9/22/20).
- Brooke Gifford seconded the motion.
- Minutes of the previous meeting were passed.

Agenda

Welcome Dekalb County School Leadership

- Mr. Noel Maloof (Chief Operations Officer for Dekalb County School District), Mr. Lemuel Hawkins (Senior Project Manager), Mr. Richard Boyd (Director of Design and Construction), Mr. Marshall Orson (Chair of Dekalb County Board of Education), Mr. Trenton Arnold (Region 2 Region Superintendent from Dekalb County School District, Mr. Bobby Moncrief (new Director of Facilities and Maintenance) were guests at our meeting

Questions from our Community

- General Information (Mr. Orson): School District is going to be starting a “comprehensive master planning process” looking at all the school buildings over the next year, with a major piece to be completed by November 2021, but continued process over the next 10 years
 - Process will included looking at all facilities, where they are located, conditions of facilities, look at future growth or declines in populations in areas- this will help ensure that the county is making proper investments in their schools, including where to invest in new constructions or invest in existing, older buildings, or even possibly in decommissioning buildings
 - Looking to get votes for \$5 million in SPLOST 6 funding to support projects

- QUESTION: After conversations during the redistricting meetings last year with the former Chief Operating Officer, it was made very clear from his comments that he felt that the older neighborhood schools were not worth continued upkeep in the county's efforts to transition to larger model elementary schools such as Fernbank. Neighborhood schools are truly the heart of the community, and they are indeed essential until the larger schools are built. With no plans on the horizon to build another of these larger schools in our region, how will the district ensure that the safety and comfort of our students and staff and the upkeep of our school will continue to be addressed promptly? There's no doubt that our building is aging, but it would be an incredible disservice to our students, staff, and community to not address high budget repairs that will have immediate and long-standing benefits to your constituents.
- ANSWER: (Mr. Maloof)- Understands the importance of a neighborhood school, aging or not, but it can come with challenges. They sometimes have been "creatures of neglect" in the past, though they have good bones. "Buildings like Laurel Ridge will continue to get the focus and attention that they need." Processes do take time, but they will continue make sure it is a priority.
 - Things they have done since June: 57 work orders have been put in, 40 have been completed, 8 of which (since January) have been regarding HVAC, 6 of which have been completed and the other 2 have been in the last week and will be completed with ASAP
 - Window replacement- They have determined that window replacement is in the best interest of the school, though they have been doing some other remedies, such as spot painting areas with lead paint, but window replacement is in best interest of the school long term
 - Reallocation of SPLOST 5 funds in the county (based on facility conditions)- One of the projects chosen and approved is a major HVAC system upgrade (\$7.38 mil for just for HVAC and related infrastructure upgrades for a major system overhaul) for Laurel Ridge. This is ready for their procurement department and looking at the beginning of the year to move forward with that.
 - Other projects- Laurel Ridge will have a security fence put in (Spring); projects already completed- new grease trap has been put in and back flow preventer, as well as HVAC has already been put into the gym
 - He "do(es) not want to send a message that your building is not worth putting money and time into"
 - Dedication to full system upgrades for schools throughout the county
 - Mr. Orson- The new track at DHMS shows investment in the cluster
- QUESTION: Parents were told that painting over the lead paint on the windows was an option, in addition to painting them shut. Why would painting windows shut be an option due to ventilation with COVID-19 or for use as an emergency exit?
- ANSWER: (Mr. Maloof)- They will not be painting windows shut, this is not their methodology. They use a method of painting to encapsulate lead paint, based on EPA guidelines. This will be a temporary fix, however, because but it was decided that a window replacement would be in the best interest of the students and the school.

- QUESTION: We heard from our PTA that there was some discussion about getting new windows but these windows were not going to be operational. That is not a good idea because of our still defective HVAC and CDC recommendations of adequate ventilation due to COVID. Can the district may the commitment to us to get new, operational windows for our building?
- ANSWER: (Mr. Maloof) Laurel Ridge will be getting new windows and they will be operational windows! It should be a fairly quick job, once the units come in.
- QUESTION: I noticed that the windows outside the school building are still not painted, and they are chipping away. All those chips can go into the ground and contaminate the soil. Are there plans to paint those windows, and if so when?
- ANSWER: (Mr. Maloof) Yes, remediation will be done on the outside of the windows, just as it has been done on the inside. This should be starting in the upcoming weeks, by a certified company.
- QUESTION: We learned that you are planning to replace the windows at some point in the next few months. If the kids return to school, would it that be a bad idea? Would it be better if the windows get replaced during the summer months?
- ANSWER: (Mr. Maloof) Typically summer is the easiest time, but they are planning to coordinate and make plans to work with Ms. Schrock and get the work done before that, at the appropriate times. The timeframe will mostly be dependent upon when the new windows are available and can be delivered. It will also depend on the timeframe of students returning to school. If the Laurel Ridge Community really wants to push for it to be done in summer, then they can probably accommodate that instead.
- QUESTION: Will the company that will be doing the work moving forward, be certified to work on buildings that potentially have lead paint?
- ANSWER: Yes
- QUESTION: When will the new sign be functional?
- ANSWER: (Mr. Hawkins) 12 new signs have been put up in the District this year, so there was a backlog, but we should have an electrician out to LRE by November 20th or the week of November 23rd. Once that happens, it will be fully ready for use.
- Mr. Orson also shared that at Druid Hills High School, the graduation rate in 2018 was 77%, but that it is now up to over 85% (2020).
- Ms. Schrock thanked the team from the county for all the improvements that have been made at the school- new ceiling tiles in the cafeteria, new lighting in the library and Special Education classrooms, new hot water heater in the art room, fixing the gutter in the front of the school, etc.

PTA Executive Committee Updates

Treasurer Report- Katie Miller

- Beginning Balance- (6/1)- \$64,866
- Expenses- \$5,502
- Income- \$5,735
- Ending Balance (11/10)- \$64,487

Other Updates- Maria Davila

- We will not be having Boostertion this year, due to complications with Covid-19, but the deposit we have submitted for this year will be rolled over to next year
- Teacher Reimbursement Program- 9 Teachers have already requested
 - Up to \$200 allowed
 - This covers books, training/professional development, and supplies
 - Encourage more participation
 - A question came from a parent- Can this reimbursement be used for Internet upgrades for teachers? The executive board will discuss and figure out how to do the receipts for this (Hot spots have not been loaned to the staff through the county)
- The Executive Board has not met with Committee Chairs, but hope to do so in the near future
- The videos/minutes of the general PTA meetings will be translated into Spanish
- The PTA was working with Ms. Schrock to purchase desk shields for when students return to school, but because numbers of Covid-19 are increasing in our area and the date to return to school has been postponed, this has been put on hold.

Principal's Report

- Status Quo is a sign of success right now
- The LRE Teachers are doing an amazing job, particularly with engaging, challenging and supporting students, families and each other virtually. THANK YOU ALL! Families, please maintain open communication with teachers.
- Parent-Teacher Conferences- Leadership will discuss more formal Parent-Teacher Conference dates; Wednesdays were designated as a time for parents and teachers to connect, but they will work on figuring that out
- Black Lives Matter Week- This week! Please join morning announcements and the Black Lives Matters Conference (county-wide) on Thursday
- Literacy Committee is planning and working on an upcoming Virtual Literacy Night- December 10th @ 6:00 pm
- Very excited about the new operational windows and complete overhaul of the HVAC system

Upcoming Events/Activities*

November

- Book Fair- 6th-19th
- Care Closet Supply Drive- 10th-12th & 16th-19th (non-perishables, school supplies, household items & personal items)
- Scavenger hunt activity for students- more information to come!

- Teacher Thank You video- please submit your child's video by Wednesday- 18th
- Plastic Bag and Film recycling- more details coming soon

December

- Senior Citizen outreach- students connecting to individuals in our community over the holidays; let us know if you have ideas or connections to any local organizations
- Winter Craft for Kids- Curbside pick-up at the school; dates to follow
 - Staff members are missing the kids, so there may be a surprise ugly sweater contest at this time, as well

***see PTA calendar**

<https://www.laurelridgeelementary.com/calendar>

Adjournment

- Sarah Smith moved to adjourn the meeting.
- Whitney McGinness seconded adjournment.
- The meeting was adjourned at 7:32 pm.