

Peekskill CSD PTO Committee Annual End-of-Year Evaluation Form

Submission Date: June 9, 2022

School Year: 2021-2022

Committee: ADVOCACY

Highlights of events/processes that worked well this year:

Legislative Meetings: Due to the NY State legislature's commitment last year to fulfill Foundation Aid obligations, there was not a need to advocate for this funding this year. There were, however, other funding issues identified by the NYS School Board Association, and we participated in one of those meetings with Assemblymember Sandy Galef. As the meetings with legislators were organized by NYSSBA, all other legislative meetings for Peekskill's funding concerns were attended by PCSD BOE members and Dr. Mauricio only. Funding issues this year included monies for COVID-specific needs as well as new costs for new students transitioning into the district. PCSD added hundreds of new students this year, and the current funding formulas will only apply funding for them in the next complete funding cycle, which in some cases is almost 2 full years after their arrival into the district. This means that the district must use funds to support these students rather than other programs, ultimately continuing to cause a shortfall in what is needed for a fully-funded and robust education for all our students.

Because the Advocacy committee did not need to focus solely on funding issues, we were able to address other concerns that include:

Safe Routes Peekskill: Formed Safe Routes Peekskill, a coalition of the PTO, PCSD, and Peekskill Walks. Conducted site visits to each school building during drop-off hours in the fall. Wrote and disseminated a Crosswalk Survey in late winter about the status of crosswalks, sidewalks and signage in the School Zones around each building, which was shared with the City Manager, the head of DPW, the Chief of Police, and County representatives. Initiated a meeting in regards to pedestrian safety on Washington St - with particular focus on the portion from Hudson to South St. as it adjoins the middle school - with PCSD, city, police, and county officials. Researched starting a "walking bus" program within the district, with plans in the works for an inaugural run starting at Oakside this coming fall. Initiated a conversation with County Legislator Colin Smith regarding the traffic safety on Washington Street, which will continue over the summer and beyond to improve the conditions for students walking on, crossing and families dropping students on the Washington Street side of PKMS. We offered to join conversations regarding Main Street and North Division, which are currently undergoing safety improvements by the county, as well.

Wins so Far: advocated to have a Crossing Guard added to the Hadden St. side entrance at Oakside, suggested the City add a "Code Enforcement" tab to the drop down list on the website "Contact Us" page, and got a commitment from the City and DPW to repaint and inspect all crosswalks in School Zones prior to the start of each school year.

Board Of Education Candidate Forum: This year's forum ended up not qualifying for a moderator from the League of Women Voters, due to the fact that the race was uncontested. When it was discovered that one seat would be unfilled by an incumbent, Eric Reveda declared a write-in campaign and withdrew as moderator of the forum. Margery and Meghan stepped in to oversee operations; Margery moderated and Meghan kept time. On the day of the forum, a second write-in candidate made herself known. We adapted the format of the forum to allow time for the two write-in candidates to make a statement at the end of the question and answer period for the 2 declared candidates.

Playground Equipment, Supplies & Recess: Parents across the district continue to raise concerns about PCSD playground equipment, supplies and the short amount of time students have for recess. In a conversation this spring with Branwen McDonald, several parents from the PTO Executive Committee agreed to provide support to a BOE sub-committee to address these concerns that deeply impact the social, emotional and academic lives of students at every grade level. The PTO committed to purchasing toys for use at each school: jump ropes, balls, frisbees, etc. to enhance the play offerings at each school. The larger issues of the place of play and outdoor activity will be addressed going forward by the subcommittee. We are grateful to Trustee McDonald for taking leadership on this important issue.

Areas in need of improvement & suggestions on how to make improvements:

We got Safe Routes Peekskill up and running, and priorities established this year, and we are making progress with city and county government relationships. We need to work on the advocacy training for families and students; make connections into the district to ground the work in curriculum and already other established programs; expand our network and connections with other organizations in Peekskill. Connections with Saturday Academy - this year, there were lots of changes to the format due to multiple COVID surges. It was hard to rely on it as an outreach method with families and students

Establish an advocacy calendar to be prepared for the candidate forum, legislative meetings and other standard activities each year.

Should this committee continue next year in its current form? Why or why not? If not, what changes are recommended?

There are a LOT of Advocacy issues coming to the fore. The committee will NEED a co-chair, and committed committee members who can represent in different areas and issues
Having a team trained and ready and already involved will be key to success in many areas.
I, Margery, have complete faith in Meghan, but she cannot do it all alone!

[Keeping Our Schools Safe Report](#): In our May 2, 2022 Executive Committee meeting, a request was made by Dr. Mauricio for parent volunteers to participate in the District Wide Emergency Response Team. The above linked report from Everytown for Gun Safety, the American Federation of Teachers & the National Education Association, which addresses school safety and makes excellent and reasonable recommendations for districts to follow which could ground these critical discussions. The fact that the report gives clear info on school resource officers, entry points to the buildings and lockdown drills make it a critical resource to be used when reviewing district policies. Margery sent this report to all members of the BOE and Dr. Mauricio and asked for it to be used to guide conversations going forward about school safety. Given that the District Wide Emergency Response Team addresses emergencies and the daily safety issues that Safe Routes Peekskill also addresses, we strongly support involvement on this committee.

The Advocacy committee is going to need multiple representatives for these projects going forward!

Proposed itemized committee budget for upcoming school year:

\$125 for LWV moderator - BOE forum

\$350 for Advocacy Committee and Safe Routes PR items as coalition is built and needs arise: possible expenses include training & refreshments for volunteers; Safe Routes event to train students and families on pedestrian and traffic safety

Any other pertinent information necessary for planning:

From Margery: It has been my privilege to represent the Peekskill City School District Parent-Teacher Organization as an advocate and Executive Committee member for these past few years, as well as an officer previously. I hope that the good work we have been doing will continue, build and grow so that every student in Peekskill receives a robust, equitable and well-funded education in a safe and supportive community. Thank you for trusting me for all these years to be a leader, a colleague and a friend.

Submitted by: Margery Rossi, Eric Reveda & Meghan Sheldon-Brungard