

Meeting Minutes

REPAC Meeting: Thursday, September 8, 2022 6:00 PM

Riverside High School Media Center

(Apologies in advance for any name misspellings or folks who attended but aren't listed. Feel free to send corrections.) Bonny Dansie, Karrie Comatas, Linda Walters, Michelle Guilmette, Kathy Holt, Sabrina Lamar, Chris Lee, Teri Lowder, Amy Rawlings, Addi Hernandez, Griffin Sloop, Julia Cranford, Bridget Bishop, Kelly Andrew, Kate Mitchell, Mary Taylor, Stephanie Brennan, Carol Wolff, Jenny Ostrovsky, Katie Hanczarek, Yolanda Brown, Caroline Smith, Stephanie Simon, Julie Dodge, Imre Gutay, Julie Lobbad, Lisa Pipeling, Sarah Musser, Debra Hearn, Teresa Purdy, Andy Slaughter, Henry Sommerville, Charles Cloutier, Bob Wescott, Deborah Ballard, Raymond Hearn, Kim Bowers, Alexandra Spessot, Cindy Soloe, Rae Ann Spreitzer, Ryan Patridge, Adam Tokonitz, Tim Velegol

Minutes prepared by Jill Foster

- **NOTE:** The Executive Board met at 5:45pm to approve the draft budget for presentation to the general membership. Michelle Guilmette motioned to approve, Karrie Comatas seconded, and the budget draft passed unanimously.

Introduction to REPAC:

All engineering parents are automatically members of REPAC, no dues required. The group started in 2008, became a 501(C)(3) non-profit corporation in 2016, and supports the teachers/students in a variety of ways: providing opportunities for students for service, Speaker Days to enhance education, funding for equipment, supplies, etc. REPAC is always looking for new ideas and expanding as appropriate, so let us know if you have suggestions.

General ways to get involved:

Help is always needed with food donations for events needing hospitality, staffing events needing volunteers, and serving on or chairing a committee. Note that all families are strongly encouraged to support and contribute to the Riverside community as a whole and not just to the engineering program. Many different support organizations exist at RHS, including the PTA, Sports Boosters, ROTC boosters, Chorus/Band Boosters, etc. All groups can use help and support!

Current REPAC committee needs:

- Durham Bulls concessions coordinator - involves communicating/coordinating with the Durham Bulls contact person as well as with RHS stand leaders and volunteers for games. Attendance not required at the games. This position will begin in February for the next Bulls season.
- Stand Leaders for Durham Bulls - works 2-3 games in the season and leads the volunteer effort at those games.
- Hospitality chair or co-chairs - coordinates food donations from families for Fall and Spring Speaker Day & a few smaller events such as the Engineering Info session at the Staff Development Center and teacher appreciation lunch in May.

- Science Olympiad concessions chair - RHS will be the host school again this year, and REPAC will sell concessions as in the past. Isn't a big fundraiser, but provides the service of easy meals for participants, and creates volunteer hour opportunities for RHS students.

More info on these opportunities will be provided through the year. Get in touch with REPAC president, Linda Walters (ljwaltersrph@gmail.com), or Mr. Velegol with questions or to volunteer.

REPAC Google Group and website

Make sure to sign up for the REPAC google group, which often provides additional information to what Mr. Velegol sends. Email Linda (ljwaltersrph@gmail.com) to get signed up, or go to the quick link on the REPAC website (<https://www.repac-riverside.org/>). There is lots of info on the REPAC website, and be sure to read all of Mr. Velegol's emails carefully!

Approval of meeting minutes from May 2022

Motion to approve by Teri Lowder. Seconded by Sabrina Lamar. Approved.

2022-2023 budget approval

The budget is currently robust due to the great Bulls concessions fundraisers and money not spent due to the School's closure during covid. The Bulls fundraising revenue is a little less this summer, maybe due to the Bottoms Up stand being set back from the concourse. Notes about this year's budget:

- Community building has been added as a line. Used to have the welcome back picnic, but the program has grown too much to accommodate everyone. Had the engineering extravaganza as part of open house this year, but would like to add more events where families can interact.
- Increased classroom supplies line, as we have a 6th engineering teacher, and each gets a stipend for consumable classroom supplies.
- Big line item for classrooms and maker space. Bought tables last year for Mr. Tokonitz's room, have bought a laser cutter and other big ticket items in the past.
- Increased the Sage grant amount due to rising supply costs. Still funding 10 grants, but at \$150 instead of the original \$100.
- Raised senior celebration cost due to increased food costs.
- Promotional items – TSA and NTHS have requested banners and tablecloths to promote their groups at community events.
- Four PLTW teachers are going up for National Board Certification and need equipment to record their lessons for the process. Need about \$1500 to finish outfitting a complete set up for each teacher.
- Web hosting renewal year for the next 2 years.
- Questions? Motion to approve the budget Michelle Guilmette. Bridget Bishop seconded. Approved.

Committee updates:

- Thanks to the folks who helped plan the extravaganza at open house (Jill Foster, Sabrina Lamar, Kristin Bradley-Bull, Shelagh Kenney).

- Teri Lowder: **Spirit Wear**. Sale will cut off on Sept 12th. Right now, the vendor estimates 4-5 weeks for fulfillment but hopefully would be done sooner. Order now for the holidays just in case.
- Kathy Holt: **Community Service**. Planning 1-2 events per month. Triangle Land Conservancy is Oct 8th for invasive species removal in Brumley Forest; Oct 29th and Dec 3rd at the diaper bank; something in Nov TBD. October has the Big Sweep. Kathy has a chaperone listserv, as chaperones are needed in order to run the events. Chaperones have been recruited for the 3 events already set up, but reach out to join the chaperone list for future events or if you know of community organizations that might need help.
- Kim Bowers: **Programs and Grants**. The committee looks for sources of funding to help support the engineering Dept. Have gotten tools for the maker space, large grant from John Deere to expand the Computer Science program, etc. Expanded into programs as well with a brand new student grants program (Sage Grants). Students can work with their teachers to submit a grant application and receive up to \$150 funding for a project. Was discussed with students at the engineering assembly. The Programs and Grants committee meets once/month and welcomes all volunteers. First meeting will be Sept 19, 6pm. All can help by keeping an eye out for funding/grant sources from companies and workplaces, etc. Might be another project soon – engineering students building vertical hanging shelves in the greenhouse for use with the OCS program. More info to come.
- Karrie Comatas: **Speaker Days**: There are 2 per year, one Fall and one Spring. Speakers from different engineering/computer science/technology disciplines and work sectors (government, industry, academia) are invited in, 30 min per speaker. Parents donate food for the speaker hospitality.

Next REPAC meeting will be held Thursday, Oct 13th, 6pm, Media Center

Meetings are usually the 2nd Thurs of the month, but the November and May meetings will bump to the 3rd Thursday due to conflicts on the calendar. There won't be a January meeting, as the month is too busy with finals, etc.

Tim Town Hall

Thanks to all for showing up. The teachers can't do what they do in the program without the support of parents/REPAC. It was created out of necessity in 2008, when the program couldn't even get computers until mid-Fall, and parent involvement was needed to create action. Without that voice in a bureaucracy, it can be hard to move things forward.

There are only 10 teachers still at RHS from when Mr. V started 17 years ago. There's been a lot of change to the school – hard to sustain an enterprise of this complexity and magnitude with constant change. REPAC helps to sustain institutional memory, as 50% of the teachers turn over every 3 years. Appreciate folks stepping up to help wherever they can. Teachers don't want help in the classrooms, but there are many support organizations around the school who need help to stay afloat.

Of all school age students in Durham, only 52% attend DPS schools. Startling statistic. He believes strongly that the rising tide lifts all ships. Public schools should be expected to do that. There's an obligation to reciprocate and share information with parents, to bring much of what's going on in the

school and in the engineering program to them. The goal is always to finish meetings by 7:15pm. Tim will stay to answer individual questions as late as needed, as folks aren't always comfortable bringing up their concerns publicly. He will share what he knows to give parents a better understanding of what's going on at the school.

Lots of talk about covid affecting the labor market, supply chain, etc. Has been some exaggeration about the education crisis – in some places, education is getting along fine and in some places it's not. RHS has had the good fortune of stability in the ranks of senior/veteran teachers but retirements are coming. AP level and upper level honor class teachers are still here. The Front Office is where most people have experienced issues due to understaffing and new personnel. RHS lost 5 guidance counselors last year, and the school only has 6 total. It puts a serious dent in ability to do things.

DPS central office and maintenance is also slow and have issues that can be crippling to an organization. RHS currently has no data manager, and the Assistant Principals are fairly new. The struggle is real and will continue. The voices of parents offering constructive feedback/support to the admin team and central office will be important. RHS veteran teachers aren't looking for praise and kudos – they get gratification from the intrinsic satisfaction of helping students. If we find a way to make sure that our teachers are treated with dignity and are reminded that we appreciate the job they do, that will go a long way. Real praise can be very powerful – timely, explicit, genuine and sincere.

RHS hired 3 tremendous new counselors. Excited about what they're bringing to the team. All in all, most students have schedules and classes they're primarily happy with. Data manager is still desperately needed.

The engineering assembly helps to set the culture for inclusivity, respect, and celebration of achievement.