

Town Meeting

1-23-14

Town Meeting

1/23/2014

Precursors

- SAB – No.
- Staff Meeting – No.

Announcements

- Hot Chocolate Laboratory. Make your awesomest hot chocolate ever – then curl up with a book and enjoy. Shirlington Library, TODAY from 4:30 to 5:30.
- Les Miz is coming! Tickets on sale NOW – check it out. Buy them in Eleanor's room, buy soon, they're selling fast. Front row is the "action" row – get 'em now.
- Middle School Students! Afterschool Fun Club continues: Each Tuesday from 4 to 5:30. Sports, games, art, etc. Room 209 & Gym. Sponsored by Arlington Dept of Parks and Rec.

Motions

- Motion to form a committee to organize creative expression and essay writing to support the reasons why the middle school and high school at HBW should remain "coupled" (see discussion, below). This committee will be open to the whole school and will be made up of a mix of students, teachers, and administrators. We could go to a County Board meeting and present our artwork explaining HBW's culture and importance. We could also make a documentary on HBW as well. English teachers should publicize this committee in their classes. Perhaps we could use Discoveries to get Middle School students involved? No — the Discovery system is not appropriate, but they could work TA on Fridays. Motion PASSED.
- Motion to create a committee to draft a letter to the School Board explaining HBW's position on the proposed "split" of middle and high schools and create a policy committee that explores overcrowding. Could these committees be combined? Aren't they dealing with the same issues? Counterpoint: these are two discrete issues. Although these committees will work together, historically such collaboration occurs during Town Meeting. Motion TABLED.

Discussions

- Continued discussion from last week: County sent "More Seats for Students" survey to some parents which included a question about splitting HBW into middle and high school programs. Recently, there was a survey sent to all parent PTAs regarding overcrowding. HBW's PAC is not a PTA and therefore was accidentally left off of the distribution. One of the questions included in the overcrowding survey was whether HBW should split into a middle school and a high school. Overall reaction at Town Meeting was that such a split would be counter-productive to our purpose. However, HBW will need to make concessions as more students enter the Arlington school system. Right now the "bulge" of over-population is in the elementary school level but soon Middle schools and High schools will be feeling the impacts of Arlington's overcrowding problem. The County would prefer not to/cannot buy up more land to deal with this overcrowding and will first look to renovate existing buildings and add more students. HBW and Stratford are both appealing targets for such efforts. An HBW PAC member will come next week to speak on this issue. In addition, a few students should join the PAC to prepare a presentation about why our school should not be "decoupled." Even though these changes are not imminent, we should be preparing a contingency plan. What is our reaction to this?
- Could we add more slots for Middle school? High school? Perhaps in an effort to solve the problem we could offer one additional slot per elementary school. This would be around 20 more kids per grade.
- The School board wants an attractive alternative to dismantling the school. We should come up with some sort of offer. The Board will want to keep us because of our high AP scores and challenge index. Perhaps to publicize our reservations about being split we should draft a letter separately from PAC and read it in front of School Board.
- We are a part of Arlington. We have taken on more students in the past. It is dangerous and selfish to say that HBW can't offer anything to the County as they struggle to solve overcrowding. We need to be a part of whatever solution they come up with.
- We are already at capacity. It is hard for us to take on more students. Our building is not designed for this many people: it was originally a Middle School. If the School Board wanted to turn HBW into a modern High School, it would mean a massive renovation.
- The reason that the School Board is considering this split is because they don't understand HBW's purpose. Neither are we, for that matter. Critical Question: Why is HBW a valuable component of the Arlington Schools Community? Students, teachers, and parents need come together to explain our purpose and value. Numbers would be good, but HBW is more than a number, it's a home. If we can convey this to the

School Board we might be taken more seriously.

- The critical decisions will be made in around six weeks. HBW should be acting now. Getting out information about our program to the Board and clearing misconceptions is important. HBW generates a lot of animosity from the county, much of it unearned. People think we have smaller classes because we have more funding, while in actuality teachers teach extra classes and double as counselors so that we can have our small classes. Clearing up little misconceptions like this will go a long way towards reducing the resentment of HBW and will make people listen to our case more seriously. HBW is a valuable place. One student comments that she has found it more artistic than Kenmore. Reminder Kenmore is a special place and some students love it. HBW is NOT a better or worse school than any other school. Some people love their home schools. It is simply an alternative
- HBW should be politically adept in presenting its case. We should enlist parents and alumni in this effort.

Chair: Erin Lammie

Co-Chair: Will Hubbert

Secretary: Julian Cohen

Chair-in-Waiting: Max Stempniewicz