Josiah Quincy Elementary School
2024 – 2025 Academic Year
School Parent Council Meeting

Date and Time: Tuesday, December 10th, 2024, 5:30 - 7:00 PM
Facilitator: SPC Executive Committee (Andrew)
Guests: Principal Soo Hoo

JQES SCC December 2024 Meeting Minutes

1) **5:30-6:00pm – Welcome dinner - pizza was served. Kids headed to the gym at 6:00pm with Mr. Levett**
2) **6:00-6:05pm – Welcome and Interpreter Instructions - Mandarin and Cantonese**
3) **6:05-6:25pm – Principal Soo Hoo / Administration Session**
    a. General Budget Process Overview and Key line items: The school has some facilities issues that need to be repaired. The School Site Council wanted to send a message to councilor Flynn to see if he could push this work to get done. These requests are <u>separate</u> from the school operating budget.
        i. Issues discussed with Councilor Flynn
            1. Pool renovation was being done but ran out of funds before finishing, we need a new chlorinator, $20,000 needed. This is top of our list because we want the swim program back. We applied for a grant for Swim Safety and got $50k to support the swim program, but cannot utilize the funds unless the pool is fixed.
            2. Gym floor: $70,000 Public Facilities wants it done because this school is a community based building, not just JQES. BCYF community center uses it for other enrichment and community programs after school and on Saturdays . We don't know what the current floor is made out of, but they found a floor system that can go on top, and is really affordable.
            3. Bathrooms are a huge issue, we were on the list to get them renovated, but facilities checked it as "done" after only redoing the floors and partitions, without replacing toilets and faucets. Faucets especially need to be more appropriate for our school children, so that they have a mixer that controls hot and cold instead of separate handles. The school is advocating for better faucets to be done soon..
            4. The school hasn't heard back from Councilor Flynn yet.
        ii. Things to look for in the budget: how will the new inclusion practices be supported and HQIM - high quality instructional material, e.g. student workbook, for which costs have gone up but may not be reflected in the current budget.
        iii. Showed slide of timeline and how budget process works Process starts in October for the following school year. Admin has not received the budget yet, and expect to receive it in a couple of days. They will then share with the School Site Council, and get recommendations from the Inclusion / Equity teams about how to spend some of the discretionary funds.
        iv. Questions from parents:

v. if we don't use the $50K for the Swim program, will we lose it?
    1. Principal Soo Hoo is not sure of that and will need to look into that.
    2. The $20K shortfall came about because of inspection from the YMCA, which would be supporting the school with staffing the swim program.
    3. The school is inquiring about whether the $50K can be used for that.

vi. When is a good time / way for parents to give feedback and support the budget process and negotiations for facilities funding?
    1. School [Community] Council could share a document, gather information from parents about concerns and desires regarding facilities. Gathering data and having documentation of, for example, "x-amount of families have written about each type of problem," would be helpful.
    2. School Parent Council has always written a very strong email with key areas, to advocate for the school budget. That is also helpful.

b. School On the Move prize: JQES was selected as one of the finalists, they were not selected, but still got $20k prize money - the school needs ideas on how to use it. Admin came with their own list of examples:
    i. staff professional development led by experts in the field
    ii. replenishing "lending" library with student chosen books
    iii. inviting local institutions and partners to come perform at school events.
    iv. Other ideas from parents:
        1. Can we ask students what they would like?
        2. Formalizing the Spring event with third party providers, to be allow staff and teachers to enjoy it more. More like a festive carnival.
        3. Supporting events that the community really appreciates, like Literacy Night: set aside funds to allow a great speaker to come every year, similar to this year, which we understand came with extra costs for some organizers / parents, and teachers. Admin could ask families to provide input on what events they would want to be more supported and sustainable.
        4. Small budget for room parents to get the kids together, pizza, etc.
    v. Question from parent: were there any lessons learned from this? No - we did great, we were told we were pretty much tied. It was very good competition, and the school that won, the Mattahunt, has a long history and a very dramatic transformation as the first Haitian Creole program, very deserving of the prize.

c. Josiah Quincy Elementary School School Preview Sessions (Parents Needed)
    i. December 18th
    ii. Additional date in January

d. Stop Block and Talk - 4th and 5th graders had a presentation about this. Allowing them to understand the importance of safety on the internet. Handouts were provided at the meeting, with icons for very popular applications kids use, questions that parents and caregivers can ask their children, guidance on when is it appropriate to have their own device, what kind of monitoring should caregivers do, what risks there are.

e. Stop Turn Tell: for the younger kids, as we are going back to the lower level playground now that it is completed, having some awareness around objects like broken glass, needles, etc.

f. Bi-Lingual Education Program Update: DESE approved bilingual education program for JQES specifically for Chinese language heritage speakers. The school had a stakeholder meeting and submitted an application for a program where at least one content area is taught in mandarin. The program would be starting K1 and continuing through 5th grade. This is a way of sustaining aspects of the program we currently have. Even though this is for Chinese language heritage speakers, as a whole school we are recognized as offering the Chinese

heritage program to all students, with at least one period of Mandarin per week for every child.

g. Construction Update: construction has ended, except for one project, which is the main doorway on Marginal Road. It is not safe to do this work while children are in the school. It will happen over the holiday break. It will likely be a retrofit to the rolling overhead door.
    i. **<u>Questions from parents:</u>**
        1. Signage in Marginal road entry, which has letters missing and the ones left are falling off - will this be part of this entrance project? Answer: It is not part of that envelope construction project but the school is working on finding a vendor that can redo this.
        2. Trees on Marginal that were abruptly removed, will they be replaced? Principal Soo Hoo said no one wants to take ownership of it yet. She asked parent to send her an email to follow up.

h. General Q&A
    i. What is being done to improve Communications?
        1. ParentSquare and TalkingPoints are the approved applications by BPS
            a. This discussion should be focused on how can we improve within these platforms.
            b. Calendar on the website needs to be updated, it would be easier to have a place where all events are posted and we don't need to go back a few newsletters to find information later on.
            c. ParentSquare - some parents do not like that they have to click on multiple things to get to a document. Principal acknowledged there are limitations, and said they are trying to develop more of a newsletter format so families don't have to click on a pdf. etc.
        2. SCC and the school will work together on items above.
    ii. A parent of a 4th grader asked: how can JQES support parents of 4th and 5th grade students who are starting to prepare for the transition to upper schools, and may find the process daunting? Principal Soo Hoo said there is no need for that at JQES because 98% of students go on to the upper school, and it is when at the upper school that they decide to go to exam schools etc. Parent explained that families are considering these options earlier and preparing in advance, thinking about what may be best for their own child, how to assess the options, what to do to prepare for, etc. Often the information is passed on informally from parent to parent in these grades. There could be more formal support and orientation for parents, even about the pathway.
    iii. How could we address the dumpster out of the sidewalk, blocking strollers? Admin was not aware of the issue, and explained this is the school dumpster, which is emptied 2-3 times a week. Parents explained that sometimes it sticks out enough into the sidewalk, right where there is a hydrant, that it does not leave enough clearance for strollers or double strollers. Families feel forced to move into the street with their strollers to go around the dumpster and hydrant. It can feel dangerous, especially in winter when due to weather there is an increase in families that are driving and double parking right next to the dumpster. Parents that walk don't feel safe.
    iv. Bike racks. Would it be possible to have more bike racks in the areas where students are dropped off for orchestra? With the new protected bike lanes on Tremont Street families wanting to commute to school from the South End for orchestra have to go around the entire block only to find very few spots left in the bike racks. Principal Soo Hoo answered: the admin has a walk through every year with transportation to

see if there is a need. The school hasn't seen a large need because the bike lanes on Washington Street are not used often used. Parents noted not all families come from that side. Some families take kids bikes back home because rack locations are seen as inconvenient or not safe. Parents would be willing to go to this walk through and explain their perspective.

v. Parent suggestion: can we have a running list of items or wish list, or facilities issues, accessible somewhere, so that when parents are writing or advocating they can go see what these items are?

4) 6:30-7:00pm – Executive Session

a. (Andrew) SPC => SCC name change: Josiah Quincy School Parent Council is now the School Community Council, to be more inclusive of all families and caregivers.

b. (Brian) Treasury Update and Fundraising Needed for Ice Skating, Lunar New Year, Staff Appreciation (this is different than JQSA)

i. SCC moved banks to avoid fees for low balance - we don't have a lot of money. Balance fluctuates, goes up as we get donations and down when we do events.

ii. Largest expense is the teacher & staff appreciation week. We will be requesting donations in the Spring to do gifts and the traditional breakfast.

iii. What SCC fundraising covers: food at community meetings (pizza or special dinners like hispanic heritage month or Lunar new Year), child care for the meetings by Mr.Levitt, fun events that bring families together - such as ice skating party, literacy night, lunar new year performances, and teacher appreciation breakfast.

c. (Meredith) JQSA Update - Josiah Quincy School Association Incorporated.

i. JQSA representative explained the difference between the SCC and the JQSA fundraising. They run the gala fundraiser - the big event of the year that raises significant funds to support enrichment programs in the school.

ii. Rules of the corporation is that the funds must support programs that align with the mission of JQSA- technology, movement, field trips, additional services for students in the classroom, etc.

iii. One of the main reasons it was funded was to support the swim program which is why JQSA thinks they may be able to support the infrastructure needs for the pool (the only way JQSA can support infrastructure or facilities).

iv. The fact that JQSA is a corporation allows 501c3 status - no shareholders, instead self-perpetuating board. It is a business entity that has to follow rules and have preferred tax status, etc.As a director on the board you are taking on certain liabilities.

v. There are still plenty of opportunities for parents to do volunteering if you are not a director. Many families volunteered with the planning and execution of the gala.

vi. Currently status of funds: $90K liquid, $200K+ committed

1. JQSA had an excess from the COVID era when we were not spending as much as we were raising, and also when Rowena was around she applied to a lot of grants.
2. With Rowena's departure there was pressure to do more in the fundraising.
3. Last year we raised $140K, netted $120K in the event this year looks like $220K netted $171K. Board is discussing ways to tighten the expenditures to maximize the net funds available for programming.

vii. Parent asked a question about how decisions are made regarding the use of the money. There is a process between JQSA and the administration, Principal Soo Hoo acts as a funnel between teacher requests and the association. But they are moving

towards more transparency with the community and improve deficit in communications with donors.

viii. Looking for ways to connect the SCC and JQSA where possible, although some aspects of the mission are different.

d. (Erik) Lunar New Year Celebration co-hosted with Scouts, JQES Volunteers Needed
   i. February 4th, last year we had to do it together with the Scouts out of necessity. It went so well, we decided to connect them again to make it a better and bigger event. We will need volunteers. Please be on the lookout for the invitation to volunteer.

e. (Erik) Josiah Quincy **Upper** School School Preview, school preview day on January 29th. This is an FYI. It is school preview season, and JQUS will be hosting preview days for any families interested. Contact, fill out this Google Form, Emily Tieu etieu2@bostonpublicschools.org, private tours if missed here.
   i. Kristin: There is a possibility of a private tour specifically for JQES families on 1/9 but will need RSVPs. Will work on sending out a survey.
   ii. SCC is working on improving connection with JQUS

f. Upcoming meetings
   1. 1/20/2025 Ice Skating - MLK day.
   2. 2/4/2025 Lunar New Year Celebration
   3. March Budget Debrief (Date TBD potential meeting, Zoom?) - will be great to have an update on the budget, because by then the admin should know much more.
   4. 5/13/2025 Staff Appreciation
   5. 5/20/2025 Movie night on the Penthouse

g. Q&A (Any Topics Parents or SCC members would like to discuss)

Calendar of Meetings and Events | *SCC Web Page* | *Previous JQES SPC Meeting Agendas*

Action Items:

Facilities and Budget

1. ***Follow up with Councilor Flynn**:*
   - *Advocate for funding to complete the pool renovation ($20K needed) and gym floor updates ($70K).*
   - *Address bathroom renovation issues, including child-appropriate faucets.*
2. ***Parent Advocacy for Facilities**:*
   - *Create a document to gather concerns and priorities from parents to support budget advocacy efforts.*
3. ***School Budget Feedback**:*
   - *Parents encouraged to provide feedback during the budget process.*
   - *SCC to draft a strong email highlighting key priorities.*
4. ***Use of School on the Move Prize Funds**:*
   - *Decide on how to allocate the $20K prize (e.g., professional development, lending library, literacy night speaker, spring event, or room parent support).*

Upcoming Events and Volunteers

5. ***Recruit Volunteers**:*

    - *For Lunar New Year Celebration (February 4th).*
6. *Upper School Preview private tour for JQES (January 9th) and Open tour event (January 29th).*

Communication Improvements

6. ***Improve Calendar Accessibility**:*
    - *Ensure the school website calendar is regularly updated with events.*
7. ***ParentSquare and Newsletter Format**:*
    - *Explore a more user-friendly newsletter format to reduce the need for multiple clicks.*

Other

8. ***SCC and JQSA Collaboration**:*
    - *Explore ways to better connect SCC and JQSA efforts for school-wide benefit.*
    - *Work on transparency for JQSA fund allocation process.*
9. ***Address Community Issues**:*
    - *Address sidewalk accessibility concerns related to the school dumpster.*
    - *Explore the possibility of additional bike racks for students.*
10. ***Spread the Word About Upcoming Events**:*

- *Share dates for Ice Skating (1/20/2025) and Lunar New Year Celebration (2/4/2025).*