

# October 7, 2024 PS166Q General PTA Meeting Minutes

The general monthly meeting for the PTA of PS 166Q was held on Monday, October 7, 2024 in person. Present Exec board members Barbara Coogan, Claudia Henriquez and PTA committee chairs for Social, Enrichment, and Communications were present.

- Call to Order at 6:37 p.m.

## APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Highlights of the minutes were posted on the PTA website for the parental community to review 10 days prior to the meeting. Minutes for the September 2024 PTA meeting were approved without opposition.

## PTA PRESIDENT REPORT -

- Welcomes all families to the meeting
- Reminds general membership of the PTA meeting dates on our PTA website. Dates are on PTA website <https://www.ptaofps166.org/>
- Next PTA meeting will be Monday, November 4th at 6:30 pm.
- REMINDER: All PTA Board Members are volunteers and you are all members by simply being caregivers and parents
- Here are our PTA Exec Board and Committee members

# PTA Executive Board 2024-2025

## Executive Board Officers

**President:** OPEN  
**Treasurer:** Claudia Henriquez  
**Recording Secretary:** Barbara Coogan

## Committee Chairs

**Fundraising:** NEED CHAIR or CO-CHAIRS  
**Social Events:** Danielle Bazelaïs and Christa Lynche  
**Enrichment:** Barbara Coogan  
**Equitable School Supplies:** Stephanie Tellez and Tomiko Sharpnack  
**Communications:** Elizabeth O'Connor

## Ad Hoc Committee Chairs

**Garden:** Karina Vasquez Greenberg  
**Auction:** NEED CHAIR or CO-CHAIRS

If you are interested in **joining** a Committee above, please reach out to us at [info@ptaofps166.org](mailto:info@ptaofps166.org) for more information.

**Elizabeth O'Connor speaks at this time** - Hi. I'd like to start by introducing myself and my role on the PTA. My name is Elizabeth O'Connor, I have a first grader and a fourth grader at PS 166. I'm currently the Communications Chair on the PTA. This means that I create the announcements and graphics that you see from the PTA on ClassDojo, Instagram, and Facebook. Usually the PTA president runs this meeting. I'm speaking today because the PTA president isn't here.

**Announcements** - I'd like to start with 2 announcements. I don't normally like to read when I'm speaking in public, but the last 2 weeks have been very stressful so I wrote this out.

The **first announcement** is that the PTA President has resigned. That means that during the next PTA meeting, a special election will be held to fill that position and any other open office. We have asked our previous Nominating Committee member and two other volunteers to preside over the election at the November 4 PTA meeting.

The **second announcement** is a hard one. There is evidence that an individual took a very large amount of PTA funds.

Two weeks ago, Barb, the PTA Secretary, got the PTA mail from the school office and brought it to the PTA office. I was there to hang up signs for Picture Day. The bank statement was in the mail, so Barb opened it, intending to store it with the other bank statements in the PTA office. She noticed that the bank account balance was significantly lower than we thought it should have been, so we looked closer. We then noticed suspicious checks that were recently debited from the account.

We then alerted Ms. Geller, the Principal, per DOE regulations and Ms. Geller followed her own protocols with the DOE, one of which was contacting the police. Barb and I have **each** spent at least 60 hours over the last 2 weeks pouring over bank statements to try and find out where all the money went. It is hard to know what is appropriate to say since there's an ongoing investigation by the NYPD. I don't want to say something that's not been proven in court while that investigation is still happening.

Here is what I will say: We have found, and turned over to the police, information about:

- A check written out to the individual, and other checks written out to "Cash."
- The PTA debit card being used to make charges for things unrelated to PTA activities

The NYPD is investigating where the checks were deposited and is investigating the credit card charges that seemed to be personal expenses.

This is devastating. It's especially devastating for all of us on the PTA who have spent lots of time and effort making sure the PTA can:

- Organize, purchase, and distribute Equitable School Supplies every year, a program we are very proud of
- Find and pay for Enrichment programming like Kidspire, Art House and Town Hall, and
- Raise all the money to pay for these things

I want to stress that there are a lot of really dedicated, hard working people on the PTA who had nothing to do with this. We're going to do our best to make sure the students don't feel this but we need your support to do that.

**Claudia Henriquez** , our Treasurer, will share her slides now and we will take questions right after she's done.

## Treasurer's Report

PTA Treasurer, **Claudia Henriquez**

- **Starting balance on June 1, 2024**
  - Bank balance: **\$64,817.23**
  - Auction balance transfer (Stripe): **+ \$45,280.95**
- **Ending balance on September 30, 2024**
  - **\$12,564.48**

# Treasurer's Report

PTA Treasurer, **Claudia Henriquez**

## Parent Teacher Association of PS 166Q

Profit and Loss

June - September, 2024

	TOTAL
Income	
102-000 Administrative Adjustment	-1,414.36
104-000 Auction	45,280.95
110-000 Equitable School Supplies Proj.	4,649.24
111-000 Interest Income	4.11
112-000 Fundraising Committee	
112-007 Branded Merchandise	597.18
Total 112-000 Fundraising Committee	597.18
Total Income	\$49,117.12
GROSS PROFIT	\$49,117.12

# Treasurer's Report

PTA Treasurer, **Claudia Henriquez**

Expenses	
601-000 Administrative Expense	129.58
602-000 Auction Expense	108.87
607-000 Class Enrichment Expense	54,477.50
613-000 Graduation Expenses	750.00
615-000 Social Events	140.93
615-011 Pig Beach	978.00
615-013 Pasta Social	860.00
Total 615-000 Social Events	1,978.93
Fundraising	7,609.59
Advertising/Promotional	1,329.00
Total Fundraising	8,938.59
Supplies & Materials	968.83
Unauthorized transaction	31,621.96
Total Expenses	\$98,974.26
NET OPERATING INCOME	\$ -49,857.14
NET INCOME	\$ -49,857.14

*Claudia Henriquez - when I looked at the bank account (our bank is Connect One - local bank) there was only \$7900 in the bank. Just so membership understands, that at the end of June 2024 because we were in a surplus financially, we decided to pay a lot of our enrichment programs in full instead of installments. With that said, we did not get to pay off all of our enrichment programs because of our depleted bank account.*

*The \$45,280.95 is from auction and does not include sponsorships. \$4,649.24 is from ESS. We are in good shape with ESS as we do not believe ESS was touched. Again, this is an ongoing investigation with the police, as Elizabeth stated. Our total outstanding obligations are \$59,773.10.*

*With that said we would like to vote on changing banks. We would like to change from Connect One to a different bank. Though we would like to support local businesses and Connect One has great customer service, we would like*

to change because we are limited to their hours of operations. If we need to change our password, we need to call during business hours to change it. We can not make deposits after 5 pm. We need a more robust online banking system.

\*\*\* At this time we have a vote from membership to move for closure of our Connect One bank account and have the PTA open a new bank account with another bank - 50 parental/caregivers from the membership voted for the PTA to move the funds into a new bank account \*\*\*

Q: What bank will you move to?

A: (Barb) FACE - Family and Community Engagement: suggested to us that we open a bank account with TD Bank. FACE has been encouraging PTAs within the district to move to TD Bank because of the availability to deposit cash and their online banking system.

Q: Will the bank provide an extra layer of protection like an alert for fraud?

A: (Barb) TD Bank does provide fraud alerts over a certain amount. I believe \$500. Our current bank does not. We asked.

Q: What about banking fees?

A: (Barb) We are a 501(c)(3), our fees are usually waived. The TD Bank on Steinway informed us that fees would be waived because of the 501c3 status.

Q: In my experience as a treasurer years ago, TD Bank is not friendly to non-profits. We are also concerned about fees. Can we have a bank comparison as every bank has their own ways of dealing with 501c3s?

A: (Barb) Sure, we can shop around and see which bank best suits our needs.

Q: Did the current bank have fraud alerts?

A: (Barb) We asked and unfortunately this is not a service they provide. We know that, at other banks like TD, you can set fraud alerts for expenses over a certain limit.

Q: Can we recoup the money that was taken?

A: (EOC) The detectives we spoke to feel confident that we can get back what we lost but it may take some time. In all honesty, we don't know yet.

Q: Can the bank do anything?

A: (Barb) We were told because the banks are FDIC we can possibly recover what was taken in checks. The unauthorized debit card charges will be a bit difficult to get back as the detectives need to do a deeper dive on that end. Any funds that we can possibly recover will take time.

Q: What can WE do NOW to help?

A: (EOC) Thank you Camille for asking that. We've been spending the last 2 weeks scouring bank statements. Right now we need to focus on fundraising. We hope that we can still have the trust of membership and that membership can help us fundraise. Especially with passive fundraisers like Read-A-Thon. It's a pretty easy fundraiser and fun. Last year we raised approx \$10k with Read-A-Thon. We usually do Read-A-Thon during March to coincide with the Mets reading program. Read-A-Thon normally brings us a lot of money because it gets the kids involved by reading. We will do one in November. There are other ways to fundraise and give like Picture Day (for every package you buy we get a percentage), Carnival in the winter, Read-A-Thon, just donating to the PTA general fund.

Q: What is the total amount that is owed to vendors and what vendors?

A: (Claudia) Just under \$60k. Some of the outstanding balance is from last year like the last semester of tutoring and some of the outstanding balances are from vendors for this year, in which we asked for grace. (Outstanding Balance: \$59,773.10) Just know that on 10/15 we have a transfer for \$12,900 from ESS that is sitting in our stripe account (stripe is the online payment account for ESS. They transfer funds on the 15th of every month).

*Q: Is the money in the Stripe account still in the Stripe account? And I believe there's something in the bylaws that state that over a certain amount there needs to be 2 signatories?*

*A: (Claudia) Yes, the money in the stripe account is there. There's \$12k in the stripe account that is scheduled to be transferred on 10/15 into the bank account. Yes, that is correct regarding the signatories. There were some pre-signed checks in anticipation of end of school year expenses. Unfortunately those funds were misappropriated.*

*Q: Can you be clear that it was the case of someone saying 'I'm going to sign the check and you come by to be the 2nd signatory to follow what is expected? Like was this an opportunity that was seized?*

*A: (Claudia) Yes! It wasn't like someone said 'you sign this check for me, don't worry' It was that there were pre signed checks in the PTA office that were stolen.*

*Q: Is that a policy that will stop continuing?*

*A: (Claudia) Yes!*

*Q: Two things: Is it safe to say that we need more parent involvement to volunteer at events? And is it safe to say that we need to focus on fundraising this year so we can ensure that our kids get what they need?*

*A: (EOC) YES. Tara was our co-president last year and such a great advocate for our school. Yes, we need more parent participation and focus on fundraising.*

*OK to move this meeting forward as it is a regular meeting, we will take questions after Student of the Month.*

## **Onto the regular meeting....**

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

#### **Fundraising – reported by Elizabeth (Communication Chair)**

- Picture Days 10/15 and 10/16 - Ms. Geller sent an email. This is a fundraiser when you pay for school photos or the digital download and we get a portion of the proceeds
- Read-A-Thon is coming in November, details to follow
- Fundraisers to come this year: Carnival (January), Auction (May), plant sale, etc.
- You can find other ways to give on our website, [ptaofps166.org](http://ptaofps166.org)
- If you would like to help please email the PTA

#### **ESS – reported by Tomiko**

- The PTA provides school supplies ALL YEAR round to the classes and teachers.
- We are still collecting for this school year 2024-2025
- Payments can be made on our website. Thankfully our ESS money was not touched.
- Consider paying it forward and pay for another student
- ALL STUDENTS get supplies no matter if they pay or not. This is why it is important to pay for supplies to continue this wonderful initiative that has been provided by the PTA for the several years
- Supplies are replenished ALL YEAR ROUND.
- Jo-Ann (Grants Committee) also added that here at PS166Q, supplies cost \$45 while at other schools it cost approximately \$200. Please continue to give whatever amount big or small.

#### **Enrichment – reported by Barb (PTA Secretary/Enrichment Chair)**

- Thankfully some of our enrichment programs were paid in full
- Dance (Fall/Spring), Chess (Fall/Spring), Architecture (Spring) and a new program, Astoria Film Festival, will join us in the Spring for 5th graders.
- Kindergarteners get enrichment in the Spring as they are still getting used to school in the fall.

**Lineup for Fall:** 1st grade: Dance with Anastasia (Formerly of RIOULT), 2nd grade: Music Explorations (Art House Astoria), 3rd grade: Yoga (Ms. Jeanette), 4th grade: Chess (Move One Chess with Tom Moran), 5th grade: Theater (NYC Children's Theater)

**Social Events Committee** - reported by Christa Lynche (Danielle Bazelaïs)

- All social events are FREE, that is why we always ask for RSVPs.
  - Coming up on Thursday 10/24 - Spooky Movie Night screening of Hotel Transylvania and free popcorn - Please RSVP
  - If you want to volunteer or join our social committee please email us
- Q: Since spooky movie night is on the same night as the D30 middle school fair, how can we give back our RSVP?
- A: Please email the PTA and we will take care of it

**Communications Committee** - reported by Elizabeth O'Connor

- All of the graphics, social media posts are posted by the comms team.
  - If you would like to join the comms team please email us.
  - Every year we ask for class parent volunteers. Class Parent volunteers help spread PTA communications to our classes. If you would like to become a class parent please reach out to [comms@ptaofps166.org](mailto:comms@ptaofps166.org)
  - You can sync up our PTA calendar that has school closures, spirit days and PTA events with your personal calendar by adding [pta@ptaofps166.org](mailto:pta@ptaofps166.org) to your 'other calendars.'
- iCal format:  
<https://calendar.google.com/calendar/ical/pta%40ptaofps166.org/public/basic.ics>  
 Google Calendar link:  
<https://calendar.google.com/calendar/u/4?cid=cHRhQHB0YW9mcHMxNjYub3Jn>  
 Public calendar:  
[https://calendar.google.com/calendar/embed?src=pta%40ptaofps166.org&ctz=America%2FNew\\_York](https://calendar.google.com/calendar/embed?src=pta%40ptaofps166.org&ctz=America%2FNew_York)

**Garden** - Karina Vasquez Greenberg

- Welcomes families
- Have fun gardening planned for kids
- Right now: fall clean up around the perimeter of the school
- Winter craft with 4th/5th graders
- Spring will have the bulk of the work. If anyone wants to help or volunteer please email the PTA.

**Auction** - No Committee Chairs

- Biggest fundraiser - which pays for most of the enrichment classes and other activities
- Hopefully we can get a few people to volunteer to get this started within the next few weeks
- Need volunteers to gather items, donations, help with software, etc.
- If interested please email the PTA

**PRINCIPAL'S REPORT:**

Welcomes all families

- We stand by our current PTA members and understand that this horrible situation was the actions of 1 person.
- Please rest assured that we will work with the PTA to make sure the students are not affected. We will get through this.
- I will send out information about what was discussed here for those families that did not come today. As information becomes available from the case, we will release that information to the community.
- No school Monday Oct 14th.

**Student of the Month Presentations** for September SOTMs

**ADJOURNMENT:** The meeting was adjourned at 7:40 p.m.