

Willard HSA PUBLIC Board Meeting Minutes
October 6, 2025

Attendees:

Erin Jacques Franzese, executive president
Mary Sepassi, co-president
Caroline Hoffman, principal vice president (principal of the school)
Lauren Jester, executive vice president & secretary
Lisa Britt, fundraising chair (absent)
Courtney Hanson, assistant fundraising chair
Melissa Cournoyer, treasurer
Danielle Starrantino, assistant treasurer (absent)
Katie Boshart, development chair (absent)
Janine Califano, assistant development chair

Erin: Meeting kicked off 1:33pm. First public HSA meeting today 10/6. Zoom call connected. One person physically present, approx. 5 attendees via zoom.

- Meeting Minutes noted with a black square bullet point.

Principal's Report - Mrs. Hoffman (Principal Vice President):

- Week of respect kicked off this AM. Discussed the theme days of the week on the first live Wake Up Willard. Touched on all the various ways we can show respect to one another during our spirit week.
- Walking school bus a great success last week, again this coming friday through the 24th of Oct.
- NJ schools participating in a pilot for the NJSLA adaptive testing. Grades 4th and 5th from Willard participating. No true feedback will be received by our school. This is an opportunity to be involved in and experience some of the new testing the state is developing. We will be reviewing the results for the state and analyzing how the school grades perform overall.
- Jessica Fishbeyn, our Gifted & Talented teacher and lead, is starting to visit classrooms - beginning in the 3rd grade.

- Students from last year did receive their NJSLA reports. Our school is aligned with other schools in our district. Administration has reviewed results and takes that data to reflect on how our school is doing and analyze where we may have gaps. We meet as grade level teams, and meet with supervisors in the district to reflect on student performance and future needs.
- Parents will be receiving access to our LinkIt portal so that parents can view our fall universal screenings. The parents will have access to review these online, and teachers will also discuss these fall evaluations at their scheduled upcoming goal setting conferences.

President's Report – Erin Jacques Franzese, Mary Sepassi & Lauren Jester:

- GroupSpot directory is live! Access has been granted to dues paying members.
 - Should be 264 Dues paying families (we have a few duplicates – Melissa/Danielle will need to refund 2 people – sent them the names.
 - Melissa/Danielle has refunded those people who had paid twice ... Thank you Treasurers!
 - This represents approximately 85% of families, which is slightly down from the approximate 90% of dues paying families last year (even compared to the same time of year).
 - Notes: Exercise is worth it to calculate numbers and also check against GroupSpot because once the directory goes live, families recognize who and perhaps who has not paid their dues.
- Discussed putting solar powered motion detector lights on the outdoor classroom, sent some options to Mrs. Hoffman – got approval for one and will order and proceed with installation.
 - Looking to purchase and get those installed.
- Custodian Appreciation Day – left a basket of snacks for the day & night custodians & gave our wonderful head custodian an extra gift.
- Outdoor awning project is still under review.
 - Near the 1st grade door / the outdoor lunch area with the picnic tables; beautification of that area. We have had meetings since the summer and with vendors, continuing to discuss possibilities.

Federated HSA Update:

Our federated meeting is this Thursday, so we do not have any new updates yet. The elementary school HSA presidents are meeting briefly before our federated meeting to discuss how dues collections are going throughout all schools, and thoughts on some social media presenters/ assemblies that have been identified through federated.

- Going to discuss how dues are being collected district wide; how the district can promote this to encourage participation.
- Also to discuss how to share assemblies / presenters and have some consistency throughout the district.

Erin's Committee Updates:

- 4th of July Parade (Stacie Taranto & Vicki Dunn) - 7/4/26:
 - No new updates.
- Art Night (Allison Junkers & Eileen Duff) - 5/6/26:
 - No updates.
- Back to School Picnic (Meghan Buchert, Jacyln Kim & Jenna Winston) - 9/5/25:
 - No new updates.
- Bingo Night (Anna Crane & Caroline Donohue) - 1/28/26 & 1/29/26:
 - The committee will meet soon to discuss prize options and will reach out to Hoffman/Ong/Halter soon for a planning meeting.
 - Confirm if Wed. 1/28 and Thurs. 1/29 are final dates. (Mrs. Hoffman will check the calendar and we will follow up.)
- Book Fair (Fiona Colletta & Jacyln Kim) - 11/17/25- 11/18/25 & 4/22/26- 4/23/26:
 - Main Street is booked for Mon. 11/17 & Tues. 11/18. They will drop off the prior Wednesday (but we should be able to store boxes on the stage).
- Community Service (Jaime Aliberti & Sara Noonan)
Willard Service Day - Tuesday 2/3/2026:
 - Request to move Service Day (maybe later in Feb)
 - Erin met with both coordinators and plans to schedule a meeting with Mrs. Hoffman to confirm collections for the year, and plan for Service Day.

- DEI (Cindy Cho, Miyuki Tsukada & Stacie Taranto) DEI Docent Weeks – Weeks of 11/17/2025 & 3/23/2026. International Fair – 4/29/26:
 - Committee wants to see if we can move the November DEI docent week to December as the theme will be “Cultural, Holiday & Family Traditions.”
 - The first interactive bulletin display is up (on the stairwell down to the cafeteria); “Foods Kids Eat Around the World.”
- Fifth Grade Promotion (Karen Clayton, Saskia Milanese & Laura Gorczyca) Promotion Day – Wednesday 6/24/2026:
 - Coordinators have sent an email to all 5th grade parents to promote the different volunteer opportunities.
- Green Team (Erin Jacques & Jenna Winston) Sports Swap – 3/14/26 – 3/15/26. The Daffodil Festival/Earth Day Fair – 4/26/26:
 - Erin met with her Sports Swap counterparts. We discussed a bike swap, but logistics felt too complicated.
 - Erin missed the recent district sustainability meeting, but did attend a meeting with the Pomptonian representative and Table to Table reps. The i-rescue lunch program sounds like it is in the works!
 - Courtney mentioned St. Elizabeth’s offer to clean and help beautify the Willard grounds. (Community service for families and children at the church to help beautify the school grounds and perhaps partner with the Willard Green Team.)
- Reading Enrichment (Sarah Ortolan):
 - 79 bday books (for a total of \$1,580 raised) have been sold to date. This surpasses the number we sold last year during September by a few books.
- School Photo Day (Stella Park & Jaclyn Kim) – 9/29/25 (K-2 photos) & 10/1/25 (3-5 photos):
 - Photo day(s) went well. The retake date has not yet been announced. (Splitting to two dates works very well.)
- Willard Cares:
 - Raised almost \$1,400 in donations already this year!
 - We now have several thousand dollars in the account, and should discuss gifting at the holidays.

- So far this year, we have funded an instrument rental, a new pair of sneakers, snacks & breakfast foods, and a field trip.

Mary's Committee Updates:

- ArtPop Program (Jelena Vojinovic & Grace Kang) - Weeks of 10/21/25, 1/12/26 & 4/13/26: First email sent out to the October volunteers that included project ideas and information about the collections displayed. Followed up with classes who still need volunteers. The website has been updated with Artpop imaging and information. (
 - TikTok changed their name to ArtPop - same organization. Mrs. Connor's class is the remaining class needing volunteers for the October session.
- Bake Sale (Corinne Shalewitz & Susan Clerkin) - 10/24/25, 12/19/25, 2/6/26 & 4/24/26: First bake sale was included in last week's e-news and we have volunteers for bakers/donations and for working the tables. Permit has been obtained.
- Career Day (Stacie Taranto & Meg Conaton) - 3/9/26: Meeting with the Somerville leads for career day to hear about how they do it there, obtained the schedule of all the specials in Willard to hopefully plan the day so that each class has three parents come and talk about their career (and come around the specials).
- Concessions (Diane Reed & Meghan Buchert): Next up 5th grade circus
- Field Day (Amanda Simon & Kate Heighington) - 6/5/26 (Rain Date - 6/8/26): no updates
- SEPAG (Elena Croy & Shakhi Lalani): 10/8 is a virtual parent coffee, 10/10 is the first informational meeting, 10/14-10/19 is Ridgewood Access week, 10/16 is sensory friendly dinner @ Steel Wheel
- Yearbook (Saskia Milanese & Anna Crane): contract is in, no price increase per book. Our company partners are setting up the ladder for us as we speak. Will start asking parents for photos as soon as the layout is complete. Custom cover design created incorporating Shine Bright logo.

Lauren's Committee Updates:

- Canva (Lauren Jester & Anna Crane): Flyers are being saved to both HSA drive and Willard HSA Canva account. Completing flyers as requested.
- Faculty & Staff Appreciation (Rosa Bellwood & Kate Sipala) - 8/27/25, 10/6/25, 11/25/25 (Pies), 12/18/25, 2/13/26, 3/26/26, 5/4/26, 5/5/26 (Bouquets), 6/1/26, 6/18/26 (Retirement): Staff luncheon catered by La Strada Monday 10/6; next event will be a Pumpkin Spice (coffee/cider, donuts/muffins) event Friday 10/24.
- Frosty Friday (Katherine O'Hara & Gianna Adam) - 9/19/25, 10/10/25, 5/8/26, 6/12/26: Set for this coming Friday of spirit week. Need additional volunteers.
- Willard Dads (Andy Sarkes & Al Stampone): First event on Thursday 10/23 at Bergen Pickleball Zone.

Vice President's Report- Lauren Jester:

- Class Parent Email: Initial welcome email sent to all class parents for distribution, once emails for all parents in each class were approved and finalized. The process was followed as directed by the district. First email was sent 9/24/25. To date all classes have circulated the email to their classes.
- Our crossing guards are very appreciative to know we are encouraging pedestrian, biking and cross walk safety with our reminders during Wake Up Willard. Discussions have focused around concerns for bikers who may not follow the traffic laws closely (i.e. bikes are to yield, just as vehicles are required, when a crossing stop sign is being used).
- Planters at both entrances have been changed out for the fall season. We have approved the budget for this year (one fall and one early summer planting to fill our four planters).

Fundraising Report - Lisa Britt & Courtney Hanson:

- Parent social success - over \$21k net raised
- Family photos - Melissa Gorman Photography 10/24 10/25 and 11/14. Sign up sheet was distributed with Tuesdays e-news

- 11/25 Thanksgiving pies – Wilkes confirmed for delivery 11/25. Will work with Danielle for pumpkin/apple selections by 11/1
- Valentine Family Cookie Kits 2/11
 - Kits to include: 6 cookies (3 designs to be determined), 1 sprinkles, 1 Decorative Sugar, 2 icing (red/white), instructions, allergies, boxed
 - Cost: Willard would charge \$28, Keeping \$5 donation per kit and pay \$23 for each kit.
 - Final Count needed 2 weeks before (by 1/28)
 - Kristen Dafron (baked by Kristen – local mom)
 - To follow up and discuss cost, as well as cookie count with the vendor. Perhaps closer to \$25 per kit would feel better. To circle back and discuss.
- Yankees Game– April 18 or 19?
 - Would be best to be a day game. Following up to confirm date and details.

Treasury Report – Melissa Cournoyer & Danielle Starrantino:

- All accounts were swept at the end of September and Danielle in the process of reconciling the September books
- Have linked Willard Cares account to CheddarUp as well now, so transfers from that donation collection can now be done directly
- Still need to order Willard Cares checks from TD

Development Report – Katie Boshart & Janine Califano:

- Week of Respect Assembly: SO Fun City (**10/9/25**; *whole school*)
- Polymers Workshop (**10/27/25** – *fifth grade*)
- Ways of the Lenape (moved from November to January '26 due to the performer's schedule)

Public Questions:

- Question: Why isn't every meeting a public meeting? (References an online social media discussion re: transparency of HSA meetings.)
 - Erin and Mary's comments: Other HSAs may use their meetings in different ways. Our monthly meetings are more logistical and we use

these meetings to review the agenda, and various updates to our upcoming events.

- We have added two additional public meetings over the past few years and we encourage attendance to provide a forum for questions and to help our committees brainstorm ideas. We do engage with parents through our various volunteer opportunities and encourage direct feedback from their experiences helping with those events at and around the school.
 - We hope all Willard families feel free to reach out and ask questions whenever they may need. If additional public meetings should serve a greater need, we are happy to schedule and hold as needed.
 - Mrs. Hoffman's comments: Over the 12 years I have been here at Willard, we have always encouraged public meetings and participation from our families. We started with one public meeting a year, and we are now at three. Some other schools have an executive meeting to review their logistical updates, and then a few days later meet publicly. If there is a reason to vote on something, that would happen at a public meeting. There has not been a strong interest in holding additional meetings to those we have scheduled, but we have offered meeting opportunities on other days / times and in the past have offered an evening meeting to accommodate parents. If there is an interest to revisit these ideas, we are happy to hear those thoughts. We always welcome everyone's input.
 - Additional discussion / thoughts: If there is interest in hearing from our staff on the curriculum, we would be happy to arrange for a speaker at the upcoming public meetings. Perhaps allocate 15 minutes and hear on focused topics from our educators.
 - Stacy Taranto (past HSA president) comments via Zoom: We have also posted public meeting minutes from each public meeting. To note, these minutes are rarely opened by our families.
- Discussion re: G&T Program:
- Building the Gifted & Talented program to meet the needs of all students.

- Mrs. Hoffman comments: Working closely with Jessica Fishbeyn, our G&T teacher and lead on the program development. How can we also meet those students who may benefit from enrichment resources, in addition to those who truly qualify for G&T. Starting with 3rd grade this week.
- Idea: Ask Mrs. Fishbeyn to come speak at one of our HSA meetings.
- Meeting with G&T staff across the district and very excited things to come. Mrs. Hoffman to keep us posted.
- Questions have come to an end. No virtual questions today.
- Additional comments from Mrs. Hoffman at the close of the meeting:
 - Our safety patrol started today: our 5th grade helpers are very enthusiastic to step into these roles to help our students start their day safely at our entrances. The leadership committee met as well, and the tech crew was involved this AM to help with our live Wake Up Willard.
 - We are continuing to recognize those students who are shining bright. Students are very interested in achieving this goal and recognition.
- Erin and Mary comments:
 - T-shirts should be coming this Friday for students and staff.
 - We will be posting these meeting minutes.
 - Meeting adjourned at 2:23pm.