

2025-26 Horace Mann PTA Meeting Agenda  
September 30, 2025 (In Person - HMS Library)  
6:00-7:00pm

Agenda Item:	Who:	Time:
<p><b>Welcome and Introductions</b></p> <p><b>Review last meeting's minutes:</b> <a href="#">May 2025</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Katie moves to approve, Sam seconds, approved by the group.</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Upcoming meetings:</b> (All meetings in HMS Library)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thursday, November 13th</li> <li>Wednesday, February 11th</li> <li>Wednesday, May 6th</li> </ul>	<p>Katie (PTA president) and Alex (PTA vice president)</p>	<p>5 min</p>
<p><b>Principal's Forum</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Discussion of referendum for school funding.</b> <i>Public school employees are not allowed to advocate for one side or another. Principal Litwin is presenting information on both sides of the referendum. Principal Litwin showed <a href="#">these slides</a>.</i></li> <li>The district's ability to provide challenging, engaging programs and enrichment for its 33,000+ students is dependent on our funding.</li> <li>The school district is asking for an operating levy, which funds essential things like staff and operations. General fund money (tied to student enrollment) largely goes to Special Education, English language learning, and other services. The state and federal government have never fully funded those obligations.</li> <li>SPPS had to cut \$37 million last year. At Horace Mann, we lost our reading support teacher. If the voters don't pass the referendum, we will face \$37 million in cuts next year, which would probably mean cutting music and TAs. The district could also have to make cuts to transportation funding, for example increasing the area around the school where bussing is not offered.</li> <li>To maintain quality, we need to maintain staff and minimize turnover. Continuous funding helps us do that. Schools with needier students tend to have younger teachers and would likely be more seriously affected by teacher layoffs.</li> <li>Part of the reason the district is increasingly short on funding is because the per pupil allowance did not increase with inflation from 2003 to 2024. If the allowance were adjusted for inflation, the district would have almost \$50 million more annually to match the per-pupil amounts we had in 2003.</li> </ul>	<p>Principal Litwin</p>	<p>15 min</p>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SPPS did a survey and found strong support for public education among St Paul residents, which led them to propose the operating levy. This survey was done before the city and county decided to raise taxes.</li> <li>Comparing the funding that SPPS seeks per pupil through the levy to what other metro area districts are seeking through their own referenda, SPPS's request is the second lowest of 11 districts (see slide 8 in the presentation linked above).</li> <li>The levy would increase funding per student by \$1,073 per year, generating \$37M for next year. The levy extends 10 years with adjustments for inflation. There's a website you can go to and calculate what it would mean for you (<a href="http://spps.org/referendum">spps.org/referendum</a>, then scroll down to "calculate your tax impact").</li> <li>SPPS spend more per child and less on administration than the average district. SPPS has a strong rating, which allows it access to lower interest rates.</li> <li>Here at Horace Mann, we try to focus on implementing best practices. For example, we're doing a lot with phonics while building in comprehension and the love of reading. Having stable staff allows you to do those sorts of things.</li> </ul> <p><b>What's new?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>New staff:</b> We have 7 new staff members and feel great about the staff we have. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We hired a new <b>special Ed TA</b> and a <b>general Ed TA</b> (who is leaving and will soon be replaced).</li> <li>We have a <b>kindergarten teacher</b> filling in for Ms. Doenges who is out this year.</li> <li>We filled a <b>half-time Special Ed position</b>. Our counselor knew someone from Obama Elementary who was looking for a half-time job, so it's a great fit.</li> <li>New <b>OT</b> who was here a few years ago has returned.</li> <li>New <b>lunchroom</b> staff person.</li> <li>New <b>building tech</b> person.</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>Smooth start:</b> It feels like a smooth start to the school year. We have more students than we've ever had in this building (about 476, about 40 more than is typical). This is a testament to the school's strong reputation.</li> <li><b>New technology:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>New iPads</b> and charging/storage carts for the iPads for the kids. It's a nice setup.</li> <li><b>New headphones.</b> The new iPads require headphones to have a USB-C connection, which is why we included these in the school supply lists this year. About half of the students did not bring new headphones to school. It cost</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		

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<p>the school \$3k to buy them for students who needed them. We expect this to be an ongoing expense as headphones break. This is an expense the PTA could consider supporting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>School phone system:</b> we have a new system and it's been a rocky start. We still do not have a good way to get messages to teachers with voice mail. Judy is working on this and helping with messages in the meantime.</li> <li>• <b>School garden and landscaping:</b> the new garden is gorgeous, providing flowers throughout the building. On the east side of the school, we lost our big oak tree, which has meant that the temperature in the building has soared.</li> <li>• <b>Mr. Litwin's office / cart:</b> SPPS has had a big increase in special ed students (500-600 new kids). Horace Mann went from 8% to 12% kids with special education needs, so we have more special education educators. Principal Litwin gave away his room to be a staff lounge and conference room. He now sits next to Judy and works around the school from a rolling cart.</li> </ul> <p><b>Behavior and Discipline</b> – no items</p> <p><b>Family Feedback</b> – no items</p>		
<p><b>The Vote YES for Saint Paul Public Schools campaign's</b> information sharing and questions about the upcoming referendum. <i>The HMS PTA is not endorsing a position on the referendum.</i></p> <p><i>Teresa shares:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school board voted to put this before voters. Our board has already made tough financial decisions to be good stewards of our money. The board has already cut down to the bone.</li> <li>• Further cuts would be devastating, as schools would have to consider cutting anything not contractually obligated, including Pre-K, high school sports.</li> <li>• Some of the reasons why the school districts are low on funding include: Cuts to Title 1 and Special Education funding from the federal government, with some schools being more affected than others. Additionally in 2003, Governor Tim Pawlenty changed the funding approach such that school funding would not be tied to inflation. As inflation has increased, real resources available to schools have gone down.</li> </ul> <p><i>Question from Principal Litwin:</i> If a voter leaves it blank, this counts as no?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confirmed that a blank vote counts as a “no” vote.</li> </ul> <p><i>Question from a parent:</i> What's your take on the level of support for the referendum?</p>	<p>Teresa Mozur (campaign manager for “Vote yes” campaign)</p>	<p>5 min</p>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teresa: St Paul historically has not passed these [referenda] as readily as Minneapolis. Minneapolis passes 70-80% of them even without campaigning. Last time a similar referendum passed, it passed with 60%. We are close to not passing because it must pass at 50%. In terms of turnout, this ward, wards 3 and 4 have the highest turnout.</li> </ul> <p><i>Question from a parent: What will be the tax increase?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The flyer has a link to let you calculate your exact impact. It only increases as inflation does. <i>[The FAQs page for the campaign links to a tool (halfway down the page) that allows you to calculate the impact on your property taxes by address:</i>  <a href="https://www.yesforspps.com/faqs">https://www.yesforspps.com/faqs</a></li> </ul>		
<p><b>Treasurer's Report and Approval of the 2025-26 Budget</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Overview:</b> Horace Mann PTA is a 501c3 non-profit. Every year we raise money for various initiatives. Our biggest fundraising events are the silent auction (spring) and read-a-thon coming up next month. Other sources are the plant sale, membership dues, and employer matches. It funds raised support students and our programs.</li> <li><b>Status:</b> We have a well-funded, highly engaged PTA. We always start with the treasurer's report. As of a couple days ago we had \$126k available. If you look at the 2nd page of the budget, it accounts for spending \$115k of that. So now, on day 1, we have some donations and we're in the fortunate position that we have a lot of priorities paid for.</li> <li><b>Treasurer's report:</b> The left-hand side shows how the PTA did last year, showing expenses and buckets we allocated funding to. On the right-hand side is the budget for this year, which we developed last year. This budget shows our fundraising goals and planned spending.</li> <li><b>Funding goals:</b> We tend to estimate funding goals conservatively because we don't want to pressure our volunteers. Last year, we budgeted \$101k in fundraising goals; this year we are budgeting about the same.</li> <li><b>Carnival:</b> We used to ask for sponsorships for the carnival, but this year the PTA will fund it. This is because we fear sponsorship exhaustion going back to our sponsors so soon after the auction.</li> <li><b>Plant sale:</b> We took in about \$6k in revenue last year, with net impact for the PTA of about \$1,000.</li> <li><b>Funds to support fundraising:</b> These items are unchanged with the exception of the plant sale. We added a line item for Eagle Bluff (a camp 5th graders go to in the spring). The Boo Bash is a fund-raiser for Eagle Bluff, which costs about \$420 per student. Fundraising reduces the cost for students to about \$140 per</li> </ul>	Sam (PTA treasurer)	10 min

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<p>student. PTA provides pizza for Boo Bash, which the Boo Bash committee then sells and keeps all the revenue for Eagle Bluff.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Field:</b> The PTA had \$15k earmarked for the field improvement project, including for for regrading and revitalizing the field. The district is taking this on now with its own funds.</li> <li>• <b>Field trips:</b> Our biggest spending is on field trips. The PTA pays for things like buses with a budget per student. We have allocated more per student to field trips recently because of rising costs.</li> <li>• <b>Art Adventure.</b> We had Art Adventure last year, but bussing costs may not have been captured in that line item.</li> <li>• <b>Classroom materials:</b> PTA gives each teacher \$1000/year for anything they need for the classroom.</li> <li>• <b>Band:</b> PTA pays for the band residency. We paid for instrument repair last year and we'll continue to cover \$1500/year for instrument repair.</li> <li>• <b>Other:</b> We've added funding for a few other things like family fun nights. The PTA funded the building of the new garden by the cafeteria entrance and will cover costs for its upkeep.</li> </ul> <p><i>Comment from Alex:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We do a parent survey every 2 years, which provides input we use to think about how to prioritize funding. If you have feedback, reach out to Sam (treasurer@hms-pta.org).</li> </ul> <p><i>Comment from parent:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• She is the executive director of Give to the Max and is offering support. Horace Mann just signed up to fundraise on Give to the Match.</li> </ul> <p><i>Approval of the budget</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Motion to approve, seconded, and approved.</li> </ul>		
<p><b>Teacher updates</b></p> <p><i>None</i></p>	<p>Mr. Lindskoog/ Ms. Kortuem (teacher reps)</p>	<p>5 min</p>
<p><b>PTA School Supply Proposal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This idea has a lot of support but is in the discovery phase; nothing is final, and we are looking for feedback. Rather than families going to Target or wherever to buy supplies and bring them in, the proposal is to have a committee do all the ordering and planning for all the supplies for the school. There are also companies that can do this for us for a fee.</li> <li>• This would save money, time, and resources. We wouldn't want anyone to feel they couldn't participate in it because of cost. One proposal is that we would charge parents the cost of the bundle</li> </ul>	<p>Stacey Tsantir and Solena Fleming (volunteers leading this initiative)  Summarized by Katie (PTA president)</p>	<p>10 min</p>

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<p>but also make clear that parents should pay what they can (which could be more or less than that amount).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The PTA would subsidize whatever costs are not covered by parents.</li> <li>We could host an event for parents to help assemble the bundles; this could be a nice opportunity for parents to connect.</li> <li>It would be nice to allow kids to have some choice in their school supplies.</li> <li>Email Katie with your feedback (president@hms-pta.org)</li> </ul>		
<p><b>PTA volunteer open position updates</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recruiting is going well.</li> <li>We are looking for co-chairs and volunteers for conference meals.</li> <li>Free Family Fun Nights – we have specific volunteer needs and timing for those. We'll work on that. The dance will happen.</li> <li>Yearbook – there's a request for people to sign up to take photos for specific events to improve coverage. This can be incorporated into the volunteer sign-ups.</li> </ul>	Annie and Emily (PTA volunteer coordinators)	3 min
<p><b>PTA Team Updates (see below)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Make-it-take-it:</b> this will be the first Thursday in December</li> <li><b>Auction:</b> First Auction meeting is Tuesday at 6pm, brainstorming theme, assigning themes and event date.</li> <li><b>Read-a-thon:</b> will be the month of November. Planning is underway, and the coordinator has helpers. Working on training in next year's coordinator.</li> <li><b>Carnival:</b> Jennifer Duda Butwinick is chair, and this is her last year. Working on handing off. It is helpful to have younger parents on board to learn the ropes.</li> <li><b>Directory:</b> Remember to add your information to the directory! The deadline has been extended to October 6.</li> </ul>	Team Chairs	3 min
<p><b>Recognition</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thank you to Sam for organizing a new teacher purchasing modality</li> <li>Thank you to Stacey and Solena for putting together the school supply purchase proposal</li> </ul>		
Open Forum/Action Items: <i>No other items</i>		5 min
Adjourn		7pm

### Team Reports:

### **Make It Take It**

Save the date! Thursday, Dec 4th from 5:30pm-7:30pm in Holleran Hall (Horace Mann cafeteria). Bring the entire family to this FREE night of crafting for kids, sponsored by the Horace Mann School PTA! More details on this year's craft projects and an RSVP form will be shared in Perspectives. For now, mark your calendars! *(please note this is not a drop off event - all kids must be accompanied by an adult).*

Questions or have an interest in volunteering at Make it Take it? Contact Sarah Haley at [girard312@gmail.com](mailto:girard312@gmail.com) or Grace Hanson at [gjhanson1@gmail.com](mailto:gjhanson1@gmail.com).

## **Auction**

The first Auction Committee meeting will be Tuesday, Oct. 7 from 6:00-7:30 PM in the Horace Mann library. We'll discuss theme, dates for the in-person event, and assignments for sub-committees. We will be using the Auctria platform again this year and hope to return to St. Kate's for the in-person event.

## **Directory**

It's not too late! We have extended the deadline to submit your information to the HMS directory to **October 6th!** The HMS PTA creates a student directory every year for school staff and families. This is a helpful resource for reaching other families to organize play dates, birthday parties, or anything else. The directory includes your students' name and any contact information you provide through this form. If you would like your family included, please complete this form: <https://tinyurl.com/hmsdirectory>. (Please note we cannot include any of your information without you providing it to us.) In late October, families will receive a digital copy of the directory by email, and a limited number of copies will be made available in the office. If you have questions or concerns, or need a paper copy of the form, please contact the PTA at [president@hms-pta.org](mailto:president@hms-pta.org). Thank you!

## **Conference Meals**

The conference meals committee is looking for a co-chair.

## **Family Volunteer Service**

The family volunteer service committee is looking for a co-chair.

## **Landscape**

In partnership with the Gardening Committee (Ms. Ryan and other teachers!), we have chosen Saturday, October 25th 9am-11am for a clean-up. We will seek volunteers the first week of October. Spring date TBD. Considering how to continue the clean up of beds on a more regular schedule through the summer months as our impromptu clean ups really did help to set the start of the school year up for success with tidier grounds (less weeds, more flowers and desired plantings)!

## **Plant Sale**

Save the date: Saturday, May 9th for plant pick up. Ordering by date TBD but will try to coordinate with the Auction Committee to avoid as much overlap as we can to not overwhelm families. We will only be using Gertens this year to simplify ordering (one date order by, payment processing done all through Gertens instead of requiring HM PTA to host a second website for smaller vendors), shorten pick up window, continue to have ways to purchase for school grounds in plants/gift cards

## **Carnival**

As always, we welcome new members to the PTA Carnival Committee! Planning begins in March, and the event takes place in late May or early June. We have lots of volunteering options, from planning to vendor contracts to recruiting volunteers. Contact Jennifer Duda Butwinick at [jekduda@gmail.com](mailto:jekduda@gmail.com) for more information!

## **Yearbook**

**HM PTA website:** [www.hms-pta.org](http://www.hms-pta.org) If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions please email [web-admin@hms-pta.org](mailto:web-admin@hms-pta.org)

**Employer match:** We also encourage families to check with their employers as many offer a company match to the cash donations made by their employees

## **Current Board Members:**

President: Katie Bliss, [president@hms-pta.org](mailto:president@hms-pta.org)

Vice President: Alex Stuart, [president@hms-pta.org](mailto:president@hms-pta.org)

Treasurer: Sam Smith, [treasurer@hms-pta.org](mailto:treasurer@hms-pta.org)

Recorders: Sarah Liuzzi and Bethany Hyde, [recorder@hms-pta.org](mailto:recorder@hms-pta.org)

Volunteer coordinators: Emily Phelps and Annie Mach, [volunteer.coordinator@hms-pta.org](mailto:volunteer.coordinator@hms-pta.org)

Communications: Amanda Prutzman, [communications@hms-pta.org](mailto:communications@hms-pta.org)

Teacher Representatives: Amy Kortuem and Mark Lindskoog, [teacher-rep@hms-pta.org](mailto:teacher-rep@hms-pta.org)