

2011-2012 PTO EXECUTIVE BOARD
COLFAX A.L.A.

MINUTES
NOVEMBER 7, 2011 PTO-EB MEETING

This meeting of the 2011-2012 Colfax A.L.A. PTO Executive Board was held at 6:00 pm at Jenny Ganger's house. Jenny led the meeting and distributed a written agenda. Present were:

President Jenny Ganger
Co-VP Fundraising Sukanya Srinivasan
Co-VP Fundraising Tamara Dubowitz
Treasurer Shannon Ewing
Assistant Treasurer Ellie Monaco
Secretary Margie Minkler
VP Special Events Abbie Campsie
VP Volunteer Coordinator Mark Beck
Middle Level Teacher Representative Kip Dawson
Teacher Representative Tony Woods
Principal Adam Sikorski

1. Opening and Old Business. Jenny reviewed the agenda. The most important topics would be covered first because of the length of the list and our two hour time limit before some members had to leave. She did not have an opportunity to review last meeting's minutes so no old business was being covered.
2. Parent Engagement Specialist as Voting Board Member. (Shannon) When the PTO started at Colfax, no parent engagement specialist was employed at the school. Now, the school has Diane Condie as PES, and she is involved in all that the PTO does. In the past she has come to the EB meetings, but does not now because she is not a voting member. Shannon assured the board that Diane wants the added responsibility. Shannon moved to amend the PTO bylaws to make the position of Parent Engagement Specialist a voting member of the EB. Jenny seconded the motion and all board members present voted "yea." (Jenny, Shannon, Sukanya, Adam, Ellie, Margie, Tony, Tamara) Adam announced that the budget proposal for next year eliminates the position of PES; a teacher is instead paid to work 45 minutes extra per day, taking on PE duties. In Adam's view, the proposers of this solution do not understand Colfax. We have a bigger population and need this full time position.
3. Budget
 - a. General Update, looking at updated budget figures distributed by Shannon

- We have two separate accounts: our general bank account (which had a \$30,800.02 balance at the beginning of the year) and our money market account (which had a \$18,357.24 balance at the beginning of the year.) The money market account CANNOT be touched for anything but the playground. We are not allowed to borrow from it or use the money for anything else.
- In the budget, we are projected to raise \$33,450 this year. So far we have raised \$11,949.03 (\$6,917.79 of it from the Ask Letter.)
- Our general bank balance is now \$35,671.08
- Our projected total expenses for the year, including the extra we voted to spend on the Edible Garden, are \$51,200.
- So far we have spent \$7,074.85. (This figure does not include the Edible Garden cost of \$6,400, which we have not yet paid.)
- Our projected expenses are so high this year compared to the past (when closer to \$33,000) because we took on funding of Food is Elementary, the Edible Garden, the Frick Environmental Program, and allotted funds for enrichment grants and the Principal's discretionary fund. Less impactful, we doubled the per child field trip allowance. Five dollars per child was not enough. (We now have 708 total enrollments at the school, with a budgeted \$10 per child for field trips.)

b. Should we carry over a balance to next year? (Jenny)

- We started this year with a large balance (\$30,800.) It seemed wasteful to carry over this whole amount- letting donated money sit while it could be benefitting the school. Accordingly, we planned to spend much of it this year. But should we set an amount to carry over to next year?
- Shannon suggests \$5,000, which would be enough to get us through the beginning of the year. Others fear that is insufficient.
- Sukanya felt the pressure of cash flow last year because P4P, our major fundraiser, is not held until the second half of the year. The middle of the year felt tight.
- Our early year expenses are the teacher grants totaling \$2,500, but our Ask Letter also is sent out in the first half of the year and can be expected to earn \$5000.
- One concern – what if we get used to spending 51,000 a year, when we can't actually make that amount each year? Come next year we will have the same interest in expenses, but no \$30,000 chunk of left-over money. There is no specific solution to this problem. All we can do is try our best to raise the most possible, and if we have to spend less next year, we will

spend less. This does not justify letting \$30,000 sit all year when it could be helping the school.

- No one knows if the PTO has always carried over a certain amount, but we agree \$30,000 was very high. As a practical matter, when designated money is not spent from one year's budget, the designated money no longer "belongs" to that cause. The total money left at the end of the year carries over to the new budget and is reallocated.
- Thinking it through, \$30,000 seems too high to carry over and \$5,000 seems to low. Sukanya believes \$10,000 is a good compromise. The EB agreed to carrying over \$10,000 into next year. No vote was taken.

In sum:

We are budgeted to spend: \$44,136 more this year
We have available from checking:- \$20,000 (leaving 10k unspent)

In the remainder of this year we need to raise: \$24,136***

4. Fundraising: Review of Budget Figures- What is Realistic? (Sukanya and Tamara)

Sukanya prepared a chart of the expected fundraisers, reviewing the numbers and setting more accurate expectations for the year. This was distributed and reviewed.

- The P4P expectation is set at \$16,000, which seems realistic to everyone. We will hope to raise even more.
- Isidore Foods fundraiser is not happening.
- Colfax Fun Run/Walk figure has been changed to a more realistic \$600.
- Figures for the Steeler parking pass at \$100 and Printer Cartridges at \$500 are realistic.
- Sukanya included a "Shopping/Dining out" item. Brueggers, Whole Foods, Ben and Jerry's, Double Wide Grill and 10,000 Villages have agreed to offer a designated Colfax day. Tamara believes people may object on the basis that we would be encouraging people to patronize certain stores. Per Jenny- it is up to Tamara and Sukanya to decide whether to have this fundraiser. Both were leaning toward not after the discussion.
- With the new realistic totals for all our fundraisers, **we can expect to raise \$33,300, but not more.**
- Grants: We applied for but did not get the Edward's Life Sciences Grant. A Target grant is available for next year (general education) worth up to \$2000. The application is due April 30, 2012. (Another Target grant for \$2000 may be available for arts.) A Whole Foods grant is available for June, 2012 worth \$2000. The application is due December 31, 2011. The granters ideally want

to give the money to a school without a garden, but we may have a chance depending on who applies.

5. Fundraising: the Ask Letter and Donor Levels. (Tamara)

- Our Ask Letter included suggested donation levels and a commitment to recognize donors and the levels at which they gave in our newsletter.
- A parent voiced a strong opinion to several of the board members that publication of the donations by amount in the newsletter, in our public school, is harmful. Because we are a public school, not a symphony, museum or religious institution, inclusion should be our goal. Children whose parents are not able to donate or are able to donate only a small amount may feel unwelcome, embarrassed or less valued.
- Adam received complaints that publication of the donation levels left some parents feeling like what they had to give was not good enough. So we know the donor level publication is making some parents feel bad. It could also mean families who only have a small amount to give are deciding not to do so, in order to avoid looking comparatively cheap or poor in the newsletter donation level list.
- On the other hand, the author of the Ask Letter knows that some individual donors increased their donation to meet a higher level, demonstrating the usefulness of the levels in general. Additionally, there will most likely be only 65 families donating out of the whole school. It is her view that a child would have no reason to feel badly when their family does not give because so many families are not giving.
- One suggestion: list in the newsletter all Ask Letter donors alphabetically without a dollar amount. In this case, we will need to announce our withdrawal of the levels acknowledgement commitment.
- Another suggestion: we include a statement in the newsletter acknowledging and giving thanks for all contributions to the school, including those contributions in response to the Ask Letter, but without any names. Then, at P4P, we display the list of Ask Letter donors and their levels of giving publically. No children attend P4P, so no harm would be done to their sensibilities.
- The difficulty with this proposal is that we want to do all we can to motivate new, additional giving at P4P. Acknowledging past donations at this same event may not serve us well.
- Conclusion: We will acknowledge all Ask Letter donors alphabetically by name only in the newsletter. We will then send private acknowledgements including donation levels and Adam's signature to each individual.

6. Pending Funding Requests. Jenny prepared a summary, in chart form, of the eight funding requests which are pending before the Board. Jenny distributed hard copies of the requests at the meeting. The EB received these previously via email in order to prepare for the meeting. The following money is currently budgeted for funding requests for the year:

\$5,500 designated for “enrichment grants”

\$13,000 unspent for “school clubs.”

We have to be careful that \$5,500 of what we spend can be called enrichment. No one has asked for the “enrichment grants” money, so should we consider sports expenses as enrichment? With that in mind, the EB considered the requests:

- 1) Instrumental Supplies (Mr. Saunders requested \$45.93 plus shipping for guitar books, guitar picks and clarinet reeds.)
EB Action: Approved requested amount of \$45.93 plus shipping and money will come out of “enrichment.” (Shannon made the motion, Tamara seconded the motion, Ellie, Adam, Tamara, Shannon, Margie, Abbie, Tony, Kip and Sukanya voted yea. Mark abstained.)

- 2) Saturday Light Brigade (Ms. Stewart requested funding of the Saturday Light Brigade program for Colfax. The program involves afterschool workshops in which students produce a DVD recording of stories, ideas, music, interviews, oral history or the like. The recording may be presented on the radio program, Saturday Light Brigade. The workshops cost \$250 per session, and are for 12 to 15 (but possibly up to 20) students. Ms. Stewart expects to select students based on particular talent demonstrated during community time or otherwise to teachers. She had no information on how many sessions would be needed.)
EB Action: Tabled. We need to know both the number of sessions and exactly how participants will be selected before making a decision. Also, sample DVDs from other schools’ projects were passed out and each listed outside sponsors, such as Carnegie Mellon. Could such sponsors be found for the program at Colfax?

- 3) Cheerleading Uniforms (Robyn Stefanyak requested funds for 4th and 5th grade cheerleading uniforms. The total cost is \$1,247.68, \$200 has already been donated, so \$1,047.00 is requested from the PTO.) Adam wants to fully support this cause because the cheerleading opportunity addresses inequities, as well as supporting our basketball team. Board members wonder why the uniforms are so expensive. They do get reused each year.

Last year we contributed some money to the middle level cheerleading uniforms and the cheerleaders raised the rest themselves.

EB Action: approved \$547.68 to come from “clubs,” with agreement from Adam that he will donate remaining \$500 from his discretionary fund. Cheerleaders will pay him back when they are able to raise \$500. (Shannon, Tamara, Ellie, Adam, Margie, Abbie, Tony, Kip, and Mark voted yea. Jenny and Sukanya abstained.)

- 4) Novice Chess Class (The chess club requested funds to be able to offer the Novice chess class, allowing students who have never played before to learn. The PTO helped fund this last year. The PTO is being asked to fund half the cost, \$275 and Colfax will pay the other half.)

EB Action: Approved \$275 request and money will come out of “enrichment.” (Shannon made the motion, Tamara seconded the motion; Ellie, Adam, Tamara, Shannon, Margie, Abbie, Tony, Kip and Sukanya voted yea. Mark abstained.)

- 5) CD Players for Read Naturally (Beth Pelligrini requested \$225 in PTO funds to pay for CD players for the Read Naturally intervention groups (15 @ \$15 each.))

EB Action: Approved \$225 request, which will be paid out of “clubs.” (Shannon made the motion, Tamara seconded the motion. Ellie, Adam, Tamara, Shannon, Margie, Abbie, Tony, Kip and Sukanya voted yea. Mark abstained.)

- 6) Sport Fundraiser Seed Money (Meghan Popp requested \$400 as start up money for the sports programs’ fundraisers, which would fund the purchase of uniforms and equipment, help buy things for the sports banquet, and get a down payment for new uniforms.)

-or-

- 7) Sports Expenses (instead of seed money) (Because she heard the PTO may have money for the supplies, Meghan Popp asked, in the alternative, for the needed total of \$4000 for baseball uniforms (\$1215), t-shirts for sports banquet (\$600), Pizza parties for teams (\$185), and additional swim suits, caps, etc., for swim team (\$2000.)

- Adam knows that the swim items and banquet t-shirt money are really needed now, and the \$4000 total is her wish list in the ideal. Fulfillment of these requests may last for up to 5 years.

- Much or all of these expenses used to be covered by the athletic fund. Now the school is receiving only a total of \$200 for a banquet and umpires.
- Kip believes that the team kids and their parents like raising their own money- it is a community building activity and the families can go to their friends with the fundraisers.
- The proposed fundraiser (scratch cards) is non-controversial.

EB Action on 6 and 7: Approved request #6 of \$400 in fundraising seed money. We will table request #7, and Meghan can renew it if she does not raise enough money to cover the items needed. (Shannon made the motion, Tamara seconded the motion. Ellie, Adam, Tamara, Shannon, Margie, Abbie, Tony, Kip and Sukanya voted yea. Mark abstained.)

- 8) 8th Grade Field Trips (Lori Goldstein requested \$390 for buses to take the 8th grade on a field trip to see the free film, "Inside Hana's Suitcase.") Since this is an 8th grade field trip, it is covered by the field trip allotment money. Kip will check to make sure all the 8th grade teachers are involved and aware that part of the field trip money is being spent.

EB Action: None. We will ask Lori to submit a check request form for the field trip money.

In sum, EB agreed to spend \$320.83 from "enrichment" and \$1172.68 out of "clubs," leaving only \$138.32 left to spend under "clubs."

7. Rubric For Fundraising requests- Brainstorming. Jenny distributed a sample rubric employed by a PTO when considering fund requests. We used this for a starting point of discussion, but all agreed that we need to develop our own criteria and rating system. To Adam, a rubric is important to help us stay focused on goals and know how to respond to requests. By placing limits on who asks for funds and how, the whole process becomes straightforward.

- **Criteria:** Of the criteria listed on the sample, Jenny finds "student access" (potential to impact every grade and every student), "academic core enrichment," and "duration of impact" important. Concerning "student access," in Kip's experience, programs that only target a few sometimes serve all in the end with community building. These programs may be more "inclusive" of those being left out in other ways. Adam agrees. Also suggested- we should add a "community building" value.
- **Deadlines:** EB agreed we should have deadlines, and that they are important. Some PTOs consider requests just two times a year. We need more. Should we have exceptions? Majority agrees that the system won't

work if we still accept rolling requests. So, EB agrees to strict quarterly deadlines.

- The whole EB will review the rubric, but Adam and the teacher representatives have the highest ability to decide on the appropriate criteria for our school.
- Kip believes that she and Tony can organize the teacher teams better around these issues. Tony adds that it helps teachers to know amounts.
- Our plan: Most likely, we will not be able to implement a rubric until next year. We can wait until we have time this year to focus on designing one. We agree to hold a meeting focusing solely on creation of the rubric after P4P, in March. We can always try for introduction of it late this year.

We did not get to the following topics from the agenda:

Updates on Events other than P4P. (Abbie)

Communications Update. (Newsletter deadline Nov 16, Directory out)

Volunteer update.

Plans for November Meeting.

Policy on Expenditures. (We fronted \$1000 for T-shirts without a vote. Should we always vote in the future?)

Coke Rewards and BoxTops. (Do we have an issue here?)

*** Jenny sent an email to the EB on November 15, including the following:

"[T]he quick budget calculations I made at our meeting were incorrect. I was looking at the beginning of year balance of \$30,000 instead of the then-current balance of \$35,671. I also led us to believe that the \$11,000 we had raised in funds so far counted against our overall fundraising goal, but in fact that money is already in the balance. The bottom line is, to keep a \$10,000 balance going into next year and meet our \$51,200 in obligations, we need \$61,000. We had a \$30,000 balance going into this year, so we need to raise \$31,000 total this year. So far we have raised about \$14,000, leaving about **\$17,000** still to raise this year. I updated these numbers based on the latest news on donations, but I confirmed the logic last week with Sukanya, Shannon, and Tamara.

So \$17,000 still to raise. I think this is a realistic number but it will take a lot of work"

Secretary Margie Minkler