

MINUTES

DECEMBER 12, 2011 PTO-EB MEETING

This meeting of the 2011-2012 Colfax A.L.A. PTO Executive Board was held at 6:00 p.m. at 5830 Aylesboro Avenue, the home of Tamara Dubowitz. 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
Volunteer Coordinator Mark Beck
Primary Level Teacher Representative Tony Woods
Middle Level Teacher Representative Kipp Dawson
Parent Engagement Specialist Diane Condie
Principal Adam Sikorski

Jenny started the meeting by reviewing the agenda and having each person say something nice about the person sitting to their left.

1. Old Business (Jenny) Jenny moved to approve the October 11th meeting minutes (with specific names removed where unnecessary), Mark seconded the motion and all voted for approval. We will need to schedule a retreat for creation of the rubric, but not until after P4P.
2. Budget (Shannon, Ellie) The updated budget is not ready yet, so Shannon reviewed the current numbers verbally. The general fund contains \$31,501.38 and the money market fund holds \$17,618. Some expenses since our last meeting include purchasing part of the cheerleader uniforms and purchasing headphones instead of the CD players we were expecting to purchase (for Ms. Popp?) The CD players ended up being donated. So far in donations we raised \$10,458 + 610 (designated) = \$12,878 (-pay pal costs.) We will develop next year's budget in April and vote on it in May.
3. Ice Cream Sales (Jenny) Groups at school resist our ice cream sales for health reasons. Jenny proposed we stop selling ice cream, and discussed the issue in this framework: a) Is selling ice cream at lunch a good idea in itself? b) If we stop selling ice cream, will we, as a PTO, lose money? c) If we stop selling ice cream, will Colfax lose money? In Jenny's view, the PTO itself will not lose money, because the ice cream

money goes to the groups who sell it, not to the PTO. The groups who sell ice cream *would* lose the money from the sales. However, under the current system, a lot of PTO money and time goes into this earning on behalf of the other groups. Is this the best system?

Are fruit sales a viable alternative? Adam, Diane, and Tamara agreed that the fruit sales are not profitable in the same way as ice cream sales, nor will they ever be. Fruit sales can't be counted on to make much of a profit, especially at the beginning. So far, \$50 has come in. Each piece of fruit costs 19c and sells for 50c. Unlike ice cream, fruit is perishable. It is hard not to over buy fruit. And the demand for fruit is not the same. Per Diane and Tamara, the fruit sales are also hard to staff. Tamara and Ellie would like to have a schedule of parent volunteers for these sales, and Mark agreed to email his volunteer list.

Tamara underscored that the sale of any food during lunch, including our fundraising ice cream, violates the district healthy school policy. (We do have special permission to sell the fruit, although the person who gave us the permission will no longer be with the district.) It is her view that we should not have the sales. Concerning the loss of funds, the Ask Drive covers the money that would be lost from ice cream sales. She also knows people who would donate a collective \$5,000 to eliminate the ice cream sales.

So if we answer Jenny's first question in the negative, *i.e.*, ice cream sales at lunch are not a good idea in themselves, does the Ask Drive effectively compensate for the absence of the sales? The Ask Drive does not help groups earn their own money. Additionally, it is unclear yet whether the drive will raise this much every year. Abbie suspects that the high income from this year's Ask Drive resulted from this year's economy and budget cuts, and cannot be counted on again. In contrast, ice cream is always in demand. Tamara does expect similar results from the Ask Drive each year as the people she has talked with will continue to give.

On the issue of health, Kipp underlined the input of an East Hills parent at our last general meeting: the purchase of the ice cream was a special treat for her family, who otherwise ate healthfully and responsibly. The ice cream sales do not create a devastating health issue. Also of great importance to Kipp, as was expressed at the general meeting, a substantial portion of our parents are unable to make large financial contributions. These families want to contribute a small amount of money at a time and would like to get something in return - small fundraising purchases work but large general donations don't. The ability to contribute to the school through ice cream sales is meaningful for them in this way.

Tamara believes that fundraisers offering these benefits do not have to be food. Many other small items could be sold in the same manner as ice cream by the groups who have been using ice cream sales to raise money.

Mark expressed strong discomfort with a small group of us making decisions for others who are not here. He does not like when one group wants things a certain way, and thinks this way should apply to the whole world. Abbie agreed, stressing that people at the general meeting said not to speak for them in terms of what is healthy and not healthy, or what choices they should make.

Ellie responded that we are already making a choice for people. We are say this is your one choice during lunch. Selling or not selling ice cream imposes our views on others. Margie agreed. The PTO made the choice to sell ice cream. It is not as if ice cream sales always existed by agreement of the whole school and the PTO is trying to take them away. Whether we continue our sales or eliminate our sales, this small group is making a decision for the whole school.

Additionally, there is a national movement and federal policy against selling unhealthy foods in school (including ice cream at lunch) because obesity is a national epidemic seriously affecting the health of all groups of people. Since our district has adopted the federal policy, our district healthy school policy actually calls for ending the sales. It is not just the EB acting on its own preference, but the EB following federal and district requirements.

Shannon noted that CAPA sells junk in the vending machine in the cafeteria, also has ice cream sales, and is the highest achieving school in the district. Diane confirmed that junk food is also sold at other schools. So the district policy is apparently not being enforced.

Sukanya works as a volunteer during lunch and has seen that whatever is sold during that time is a distraction. It is hard enough for the kids and supervisors to gather, eat, stay under control and finish lunches without added distractions. She is against anything being sold at lunch. Diane notes that the problem arising because there is no other time to do it.

Adam appreciated Kipp's points. Adam talked personally with the two East Hills parents who were vocal at the general meeting in support of the ice cream sales. The two parents had viewed cancellation of the ice cream sales as racial, as if people on the EB thought African American people need to be protected from unhealthy foods. When Adam talked to them more deeply, it was clear that Kipp's point - having the opportunity to contribute to fundraising - was what truly mattered to them, rather than removal of ice cream. The two parents want to be able to contribute to the school by purchasing small items over time, and they want their contributions to be valued. They do not want the only options to be through P4P or the Ask Letter. (The speakers' reference to "my people" says a lot about the larger conversation. They are, however, only two people, and, just like the EB, are not their whole community.) We can meet this interest in low cost fundraising/ desire to contribute to our school in other ways than selling ice cream. It just requires ingenuity on our part.

Responding to Abbie's and Mark's statements, Adam said it *is* his job to make decisions for 700 people, and he can't please them all. Previously, he did not view the question of foods in the school as racial because the health issue encompasses all students, of all races and socioeconomic status. We are behind nationally in creating a healthy school environment, and we are even behind in our own school district. Obesity is a national epidemic for all groups of students. We have to drop the hammer. Our expression of reasons for ending the ice cream sales should reflect that.

Jenny moved that the PTO suspend ice cream sales at lunch, beginning after our last scheduled sale in February. (Voting only to "suspend" leaves the future open, and voting about "lunchtime" sales leaves open selling ice cream at other times, such as events.) We will present our decision at Wednesday's general meeting. Kipp asked that the presentation include a statement: we will find other ways to fundraise that have small purchases for a return item. Some suggestions are art, student art, erasers. Sukanya noted that we will not then be sticking with our beginning of the year plan of big fundraisers only to prevent fundraising burnout. But, we can't control whether there are smaller fundraisers happening throughout the school, anyway, and it is now clear that some people value small fundraisers.

Jenny renewed her motion, adding Kipp's point for the presentation at the general meeting. Vote total: 10 yea's (Jenny, Sukanya, Tamara, Shannon, Ellie, Margie, Tony, Kipp, Diane, Adam) and 2 abstentions (Mark, Abbie.) **Board Action: The PTO suspends ice cream sales at lunch, beginning after our last scheduled sale in February. We will present our decision at Wednesday's general meeting including a statement that we will find other ways to fundraise that have small purchases for a return item.**

4. Party for Play (Sukanya) Party for Play plans are going fine and some have responded by seeking donations. She always wants to ask for more. Lots of stuff is on the database, including pledges. A lot of items come in at the last minute. Today she is picking up a signed Penguin's hockey jersey and tickets. Andy Norman is donating a week of Frisbee camp. The JCC is not donating a session of summer camp, but the JCC is purchasing ads and donating one membership. We also have a lot of homemade items. The only school art projects we have are the vases. We have not sold students' art.

We can always use more donations. Sukanya encourages everyone to ask for donations because she has experienced that if asked, most people will give. Only 3 people have even said "no" to her. Could we auction off use of the Colfax gym for an event? Maybe, but the auction already includes 3 birthday parties. It would be great if every teacher team could put something together, maybe a tea or lunch with the teachers. CD's could be made but would cost us a lot. Could we have other people "for the day," such as a doctor for a day, or a CMU parent taking a child to the robotics lab

or somewhere else at CMU for the day? Maybe we could auction a trip to the Children's Museum or Science Center with Adam and Tony. Maybe a sushi party or make your own bagels at the Bagel Factory?

Should we have a reserve on big ticket items, and sell them on eBay if we get below what eBay would get? Sukanyan would like this for the Penguin jersey and tickets.

Parking will be free to attendees. We have a permit to use the Sci-Tech lot and we will pay for use of the Soldiers and Sailors lot. Sukanya has tasted the food and is negotiating its price. We could use more ads. Ticket pricing is set. Invitations will go out right after break. Sukanya's focus will shift after the holidays to attendance. Let's encourage staff to come.

5. Other fundraising

- Donation Letter (Tamara) So far the Ask Letter has raised \$12,878. We now have a spin-off led by Sara Segel, motivated by the state budget cuts, expanding our request for donations to special friends and grandparents.
- Memory Tiles (Shannon, Jenny) We haven't sold as many tiles as expected. We have 60 to 70 complete and 25-30 in the works. When these are done, we will put them up, and hopefully the display will attract more. Sarah Sirlin designed a tile centerpiece and all the other tiles will surround this. Hopefully the tiles will be up when we return from winter break.
- T-Shirts (Tamara) We have 80 T-Shirts left from the order placed for Centennial- all adult, sizes 12,13 and 14. We will sell them at all events until they are gone. Shannon suggests maybe we can use an iPhone/iPad swipe device for payment. (Sweet Tammie's Bakery has one on an iPad.) A \$10 app. allows people to sign with their finger then the money would go right into our bank account. We could use this at all events.

6. Updates on Events (Abbie) The teacher holiday lunch will be Tuesday, December 20. Abbie and Margie will decorate the room on Monday. Abbie will ensure that Gus knows we need tables. Diane said they will be there. Invitations will be sent to the teachers and staff. On the day of the lunch, we need to be ready by the first lunch period at 10:45. People will be instructed to bring food by 10:15. Mark will ask the homeroom reps to ask their parents to bring items. Jenny remembers that a lot of food is brought in even if little response is given to the call out. The PTO is not buying any food. Should we have a little gift for each staff member, like chocolates? We can try to get a donation instead of buying something. There are 100 staff and teachers so it would be expensive to purchase.

The ice skating night will be January 23 from 7:00 to 9:00. We have permission to sell hot chocolate, which Colfax parent Sharon loves to do. Maybe we could sell grilled cheese if we get permission to use their grill. We could also buy bags of popcorn and repackage them for sale. Should we provide buses for middle level students? We have never had one before and there will be a low turnout of middle level students because of the separate middle level ice skating event. Dangers are also involved with skating that are not present with other events. So we won't provide a bus. If someone asks about buses at the general meeting, we can answer and give our reasons, but otherwise we won't bring it up.

7. Communications Update The newsletter submission deadline is January 17.

8. Plans for December Meeting (Jenny) We are going to try to keep the PTO portion of Wednesday's general meeting to 15 minutes. Our agenda includes an announcement only of our ice cream sales decision. We will have a "parking lot" for questions and comments. Abbie will briefly describe upcoming events, and Sukanya will discuss Party for Play.

We did not cover:

Volunteer Update (Mark)

Coke Rewards and Box Tops (Jenny) Do we have an issue here?

Secretary Margie Minkler