

**MINUTES**  
**MARCH 28, 2012 PTO-EB MEETING**

This meeting of the 2011-2012 Colfax A.L.A. PTO Executive Board was held at 4:00 pm at Colfax. Jenny led the meeting and distributed a written agenda and budget. Present were:

President Jenny Ganger  
Co-VP Fundraising Sukanya Srinivasan  
Treasurer Shannon Ewing  
Assistant Treasurer Ellie Monaco  
Secretary Margie Minkler  
Co-VP Communications Sarah Sirlin  
VP Special Events Abbie Campsie  
Middle Level Teacher Representative Kipp Dawson  
Principal Adam Sikorski

Jenny first previewed the agenda and asked that we stay within the allotted time limits.

1. Old Business (Jenny)

- Fruit sales- [A parent emailed the EB with praise for the fruit sales and with a request that more volunteers be found to help with it. In response, the PTO issued a general call for volunteers to help with the sales.] There seemed to be satisfaction with the PTO's general call for volunteers. The EB reviewed that the fruit sales were originally going to involve the school staff, the idea being to have a business model for the middle school students under which they would travel to classes at the end of the day selling fruit. This design was too problematic (with both custodial issues and kids missing class.) The sales instead became a parent-run endeavor, not under the PTO.
- Rubric- What are peoples' opinions on implementing a rubric to be used in deciding upon fund requests?
  - Jenny wants a rubric, but a rubric may be overkill and it may take too long to develop. We now have enough money to cover all the requests we are likely to get this year.
  - Adam is 100% in support of a rubric. A rubric is a strategic choice in the school's upcoming budget situation. It would create clear expectations for teachers when they ask for funds and decrease arguments for the teacher teams.

- Abbie agrees we should have a rubric but thinks we will still run into problems agreeing on what has “academic” benefit. Because of that, a rubric may not be so useful after all.
- Shannon wants Adam to have a rubric, and all teacher requests to go through Adam. When Adam approves a request, our only question would become the availability of funds.
- Sukanya thinks it is important to have a rubric. It does not need to be nitpicky or big and long. It also would not need to be used for every request. The first step upon receiving a request would be to determine if we need to use the rubric there or not.
- Ellie believes we need a rubric. With more money comes more responsibility. It is not our place to decide what is educational, that should be decided by the educational committee. A rubric would help minimize labor on our part.
- Sarah believes a rubric is essential for accountability. The need for accountability is not eliminated by having enough money for every request. A rubric may be especially useful in the coming year with the budget cuts and the greater needs of the school. On whether educational value should be a requirement under the rubric, it is fine to have some field trips that are just for fun as long as there is a mix. It may be useful to gather opinions from parents on what type of field trips they value or would like the PTO funds to be used for.
- Margie believes a rubric is needed for accountability, in relation to people’s expectations when they donate money to the PTO, and to assist teachers’ expectations in asking for funds. She agrees with Shannon that the ideal place for the rubric would be in the principal’s approval of requests. Then if the principal approved a request, we would approve it if there were enough funds. As a reminder since Tony was not available for this meeting, Tony was concerned that any rubric be created by people of mixed backgrounds and interests.
- Kipp would like to have a rubric. The coming year will be full of stress due to the budget cuts and this stress will affect relationships; the relationships between families and the school may be very tough. A rubric would help with the interplay between staff and parents. Kipp also values broad community input.

2. General Meeting Plan The PTO general meeting agenda will include the plant sale and the PTO presidential election. The PSCC meeting agenda will include discussion of the cluster grouping model and the return of gifted services to the gifted center.

After last night's meeting in which Adam outlined the effect of the budget cuts on Colfax, there were a lot of emails from people interested in mobilizing to volunteer in the school. Jenny put people in touch with Mark, but does Adam want this discussion to fall under the PSCC? Yes. The discussion of in-school volunteers will be a good segue and fit right in with the PSCC topics. The new movement of volunteers will go on PSCC agenda. Adam will come up with the school's need in terms of volunteers. In the long run, a teacher coordinator for the in-school volunteers could be helpful. Volunteers would be great for Mondays and Wednesdays when the gifted students will be leaving the school. Gifted kids' leaving on those days is a major concern, and there is overall concern to avoid the "haves" and "have not's." On the subject of cluster grouping, the instructional cabinet is seriously talking about its place in our educational model- is it beneficial, especially in the middle school?

3. Current Budget Report (Shannon/Ellie) The updated budget was reviewed. Of special note: Ask Drive donations are still coming in so the number on this line is still growing. The newsletter "shout outs" are doing great. The cost of two months worth of buses for the afterschool program has now been paid out of the principal's discretionary fund (showing \$3231.71 spent to date.)

#### 4. Budget for Next Year

- Should we shift approval of the new budget to June or even September? We do not know yet how much money we will be carrying over at the end of the year. What about having an interim budget? Some people also expressed at the general meeting that we should have all of the money to cover next year's budget in the bank before the year starts, *i.e.*, we should not commit to spend any money we don't already have. Is this necessary? Shannon believes that it will be too late if we wait for the new PTO EB to create and pass next year's budget. An interim budget would also be problematic. If we go ahead and decide on next year's budget this year, no insurmountable problem would be created. If funds get too low next year, the EB can implement a freeze on spending. Also, the new EB can amend the budget if needed with a general vote. Ellie agrees that it would be too late to wait for the new EB to create a budget for next year, but maybe we could wait until June before passing a new budget to see how our funds are panning out. Ellie would also like more of a cushion than the \$10,000 carry-over we agreed upon before. It was generally agreed that June may be the best time to pass a new budget because spending/fundraising for the year would be almost complete, giving us the best idea of what's available for next year. But, normally there is no June meeting. Should we just decide on the budget in May? Or move the May meeting to the end of the month? Decision: the regular

meeting will be held in May, and if we are not ready to set and vote on next year's budget, we will add an extra meeting.

- Proposed changes for next year's budget: Jenny presented a spread sheet with ideas for changes to next year's budget, especially in light of the new Colfax budget. The EB reviewed and discussed it.
  - Fundraising. The following changes would be realistic (but also conservative) for next year's budget: decrease Box Tops fundraising expectation from \$2000 to \$1000; decrease Healthy Fundraiser (Fun Run) from \$2,500 to \$500; increase the Donation Letter from \$5,000 to \$10,000; increase Spiritwear from \$500 to \$1000; increase Artware from 0 to \$1,000; eliminate Isidore Foods, LLC; increase Winter Fundraising Event (P4P) from \$14,000 to \$15,000. The new total for fundraising would be \$35,210.
  - Program Expenses. Grow Pittsburgh: we will apply for grants, but should be prepared to pay the full program cost of \$6,400 next year. Principal's Discretionary Fund: Shannon would like to increase the amount and add a separate supply fund. Per Adam, \$42,000 is currently spent on general supplies from the \$100 per student provided in the school's budget. If the PTO provided the supply money, maybe that money from the budget could go elsewhere. Adam thinks \$10,000 is okay for the discretionary fund. Difficulties arise with supplies because the budget requires that a certain amount actually be spent on supplies. Kipp is also concerned because it is the School Board's job to pay for the supplies and she doesn't want us to cloud or take away their obligations. Shannon notes that it would not hurt to provide a supply budget and then not use it if it is not needed. The EB agreed that, ideally, whether done as part of the principal's general discretionary fund or by creating a separate principal's supply fund, the budget allotment to the principal would be increased to \$15,000. Spending of P4P Money: Instead of having the category of Spending of P4P Money with its subcategories, the P4P money should go into the general pot. We will plan on having a straight \$10,000 allotted for "enrichment, clubs and activities," then a separate \$2000 allotted for Frick Environmental Program and \$3000 for technology. Spending of Talent Show Money: The idea has been to designate the \$500 for spending on art, but this could change. Staff Appreciation would ideally be raised to \$1000. Teacher Grants: We would like to raise the amount from \$50 to \$100 per teacher. There are 41.5 teachers so the amount would be \$4500. Adam and Kipp say this would be great so they could get student response systems. With these changes, program expenses would total \$56,900.

- Combining these figures, there would be a \$22,000 deficit in the budget. We will probably be adding \$6000 more on the fundraising side with a Big Burrito fundraiser. But, we are expecting to spend all of the discretionary fund and field trip money allotted for this year, limiting our carry-over funds for next year. Jenny will rework the numbers.
- Sukanya is not returning to the EB next year and is passing on Party for Play to the next interested person. She will pass on all of her fundraising information, including the names of people who contacted her on fundraising topics over the past two years.

## 5. Updates

- Communications (Sarah) The Newsletter will come out this Friday or the Monday after spring break. The next deadline for submissions is May 16.
- Events (Abbie) Abbie sent out Carnival volunteer requests and got one reply. She will have captains in charge of major items and then will be in charge of the captains. There will be an animal show and an ice sculpture. Her hope is that the animal show will appeal to the older kids. Admission of \$2 will be charged to view it. Jenny expects some parents will protest the animal show. Sukanya suggested putting the plans up on the web site to allow anyone who needs to vent concerns to do so ahead of time. There will be a dunk tank, and one less inflatable bounce unit. The \$2 cost of the animal show and the one less bounce unit will hopefully off-set the cost of the ice sculpture and the show itself. Abbie chose not to use Zero Waste and instead, is having a recycling team and using the city to remove the collected recyclable items. Sukanya, Margie and Jenny would like to have Zero Waste and thought it worked out really well last year. Sukanya set it and knows part of the costs were the compostable plates and products. We have some left over so would not need to purchase as many this year. (The Zero Waste people had already discounted the cost of their services for us.) Sukanya understands it's hard to take money from the Events budget. The total Events budget is \$1500. What about taking the money for Zero Waste from another source? The discretionary fund? Should we have a donation cup?

We did not cover:

## 6. 2012-13 Elections/Officers- how things are shaping up

Secretary Margie Minkler