

MINUTES

NOVEMBER 9, 2011 PTO MEETING

This meeting of the Colfax A.L.A. PTO was held in the school cafeteria at 7:00 p.m. The meeting was led by PTO President Jenny Ganger.

Jenny introduced the PTO Executive Board, including Diane Condie as a new voting member of the Board.

1. Event Announcements

- Ice Skating Night will be Monday, January 23. Volunteers are needed so please email Abbie or sign up on the volunteer request form being circulated during the meeting.
- We also need volunteers for Carnaval, our end of the year family festival. Abbie asked those interested to email her or sign up on the volunteer request sheet being sent around.
- The Talent Show has been postponed.
- Rachel Rosenfeld announced an upcoming free seminar to be presented at Community Day School on, "Supporting your Child's Academic Success," with speaker Sharon Carver.

2. Budget Update (Shannon) Shannon reviewed the up-to-date budget presented on the reverse of the Agenda, with the additions that \$500 has been spent from the Principal's Discretionary fund, \$367.69 has been spent from the Enrichment Grants fund, and Donations (from the Ask Letter) are now up to \$8155.

As of 11/8/11, the General PTO account holds \$28,312.09 and the Money Market (Playground) account holds \$17,922.02. The perception is that we have so much money, but the Money Market (Playground) funds cannot be touched. The funds were raised and designated for the playground. A parent asked whether we could use this money for the "Outside Equipment" budget line. Jenny and Shannon responded. The outside equipment line goes for replenishing playground equipment and supplies, while the idea for the Playground fund is not to spend it down on these types of things, but to use it to maintain the structural playground or add structural improvements. For instance, the playground structures will need to be repaired or replaced at some point. Or if we want, at Mr. Lydon's request, we could build a climbing wall in the gym out of the fund. But the fund is reserved for these types of things and we are not inclined to otherwise spend it down.

A parent asked why we are spending more than we make. (The year's projected income is \$33,450, but projected expenses are \$51,200.) Jenny answered that the Executive Board did not want to carry over the entire \$30,000 balance from our general checking account because it seems like a waste not to use it. The EB decided to carry over \$10,000 of this as a cushion, but believes it is better to use the other \$20,000 rather than letting it sit unused year to year. Next year, we will not have this extra

amount to spend, so we will cut down on our spending or commit to raising more. It is a luxury to have the extra money this year, and it feels best to spend it down, as long as we are leaving a cushion. Shannon recalled that 2 years ago the PTO froze spending for field trips because there was not enough money. So if in following years, there is not enough money at the end of a school year, this would be the scenario.

3. Recent Executive Board Votes on Allocating Club and Enrichment Funds (Jenny)

- Jenny reviewed the following expenditures recently approved by the Executive Board: novice chess class (\$275); 4th and 5th grade basketball cheerleading uniforms (\$547) (through a request from Ms. Stefanyak); sports fundraising seed money (\$400) (through a request from athletic director Ms. Popp); instrumental instruction equipment (\$46) (through a request from Mr. Saunders); CD players for Read Naturally, a reading fluency program (\$225); and Grow Pittsburgh. If teachers need money for supplies like these, they ask us and we provide it if we can. In this way, the PTO money will easily be spent.
- A parent asked, who approves the fund requests and how. Jenny reviewed the procedure. When a request for funds is made for something not already set aside in the budget, most often a request falling under the category of “enrichment” or “school clubs,” and the amount is under \$2500, the Executive Board approves it by vote. If the request is for more than \$2500, as it was for Grow Pittsburgh, the request is presented to the general PTO and everyone votes. A parent asked how the funding decisions are made and whether a time line exists. Jenny answered that the Executive Board is currently working through a rubric for decision-making and the implementation of deadlines. It will probably take all year to work through these matters, and then next year they could be put into effect. Requests will need to be in writing. Deadlines may be quarterly, or there may be three deadlines for submitting requests spread throughout the school year.
- A parent asked how sports are funded. Adam answered that coaches and transportation are paid through the district athletic department. There is a stipend through the district for supplies and uniforms, but we have a lot of athletics and so the money is stretched thin. There is some need to raise money for both equipment and uniforms. A parent asked Adam if there will be boys and girls 4th and 5th grade basketball teams. Adam said yes, there would be either one co-ed team or both a girls and a boys team. Adam is waiting final word from the district on this. The number of girl players, the expense, and Title 9 rules were discussed briefly.

4. Party for Play planning (Jenny)

- This year the event will be held Saturday, February 18 at the new location of the University Club in Oakland.
- We are counting on raising \$14,000 through this event. But it is not a given- we have to work for it! And we want to raise even more. We need everyone's help! People may help by selling ads for our playbook (a paper about the ads was distributed), asking businesses for donations (a copy of the “ask letter” for business requests was distributed), or donate things themselves. Think outside

the box- weekend homes or show business connections could be used. If you are asking a business for a donation, send an email to Sukanya or Leslie Grodin to let them know so that we don't duplicate requests.

5. Other Fundraising Updates

- **Memory Tiles:** (Shannon) We are creating a memory tile wall that will be the first thing people see when they walk into the building. We want a total of 400 tiles so the whole wall will be covered. Shannon just sent in 60 tiles to be made and we are extending the tile sale to the whole year. The art teacher had students create their own designs and sent them home. You may draw a design on a sheet of paper. You may use school pictures, other photos or handprints. You could give your child's class the gift of a class tile. You could purchase a tile to commemorate a school team.
- A parent spoke up about her desire to have more parents involved in the school, especially African American parents. She wants parents to know how our school is different, that we have more resources and we have teachers who are all here for the school events. She sees how Colfax teachers spend so much of their own money on their students. She really wants to figure out a way and have the PTO work on ways to get more parents involved. She believes it may work to put more pressure on parents.
- **Ask Letter:** (Tamara) Tamara gave an update on our Ask Drive effort. We are doing the Ask Drive to streamlining our fundraising: to keep fundraisers to a minimum and to keep them health and education conscious. The Ask Drive allows people to contribute directly. All contributions are valued from \$1 to \$1,000. Our goal was to raise \$5,000 and we have raised \$8,000 so far. Donations can be made on-line. We have decided to give donor recognition by amount privately, rather than publicly as mentioned in the Ask Letter. All those who donate will be recognized in the newsletter just by name in alphabetical order.
- We also have a Colfax "fun run" in the works. We are hoping for April. We are thinking of having the read-a-thon, maybe in March, Dr. Seuss month. But we need volunteers to handle both of these events. Please sign up if you are interested.
- A parent said that for her, the contact from the PTO about the Ask Letter has been too much. It has actually been overwhelming. She prefers to buy things with a request sent home and then she can say yes or no. She prefers buying actual things for a set price, like a dollar- some amount that is affordable. The Ask Letter donation does not work for her family, who wants to contribute but needs to get value back for their money. Another parent agreed. If there is only an Ask Letter, it doesn't work for her people, who she defines as black people from the east hills. She likes ice cream sales because they work for people like her. She can afford ice cream and it may be the only treat her children get all week. If the PTO wants to give healthier snacks, then present healthier choices like frozen yogurt. But don't eliminate these fundraising sales. The first parent said that she saw the cut in ice cream sales currently being considered as Colfax acting as the police for underprivileged African Americans who are perceived as

not being able to make healthy choices for themselves. She stressed that she greatly values healthy eating for her family and insists upon it. The Friday ice cream may be the only treat her children are getting. She sees this as a valuable fundraiser to allow her family to contribute. The second parent added that if people are really concerned about healthy eating, they should ensure that the school lunches, which less fortunate children depend on, are actually healthy. This is not currently the case.

Adam responded that he takes responsibility for the choice to move toward elimination of ice cream sales. He wants a healthier school environment for all, including healthier fundraising options. He feels uncomfortable promoting unhealthy eating habits. Ellie added that across the nation the trend is to develop healthier school environments, to have healthier foods in school and to eliminate food fundraisers because of the national health issues affecting all groups of people. Another parent added that there are many ways to contribute to the school besides financially. Bringing in parents and creating more diversity in parent involvement as suggested earlier is the very best way to contribute, far more valuable than money.

6. Volunteering forms Jenny passed out forms for people to fill out and turn in if they are interested in volunteering.

The next PTO meeting is Wednesday, December 14, at 7:00.

Secretary Marjorie Minkler