

Colfax ALA - PTO Meeting Minutes October 10, 2007

Meeting called to order at 7:07 p.m.

Executive Board members in attendance:

Barbara Griffin
Ida Simpson
Jenny Ganger
Donna McCartney
Shannon Ewing
Paul Foster
Jane Opgaard
Mike Gordon
Darcy Gordon

Minutes taken by Mike Gordon, Co-Secretary

1. Paul Foster – Co-President

Introductions

2. Shannon Ewing, Beth Tiffany and Jesse Ramey – Playground Report

- Retaining wall is built.
- If we pay for half of equipment now, we can secure price with no increase for 2008.
- Hoping to get equipment and Phillips side ready for play this spring.
- Budget handed out, looks at all expenses. **Jesse Ramey** ran through “new” numbers on budget.
- Two sections: One with play structure, other with soft-surface playing field.
- One day of building this spring once equipment arrives, with community volunteers, saves \$43,000.
- Explanatoids partnership is also a new number, partner with CMU, \$10,000 match of funds. Educational component to playground.
- \$70,000 still needs to be raised.
- We will have liability insurance plus guarantee on equipment/surface. School security system will be in place to help protect. PTO may also want to consider insurance for potential vandalism.
- Ongoing maintenance costs will also be committed to by the PTO.
- Equipment is specifically designed for K-8. Pictures of playground and surface were displayed.
- CMU student will be working with mid-level students on design and implementation of explanatoids.
- Personalized brick pavers idea was raised, but district will not allow.

Motion raised to approve approx. \$38,000 expenditure to lock in prices on equipment. Moved by Playground Committee and endorsed by Executive Board. No second necessary.

Q: Any guarantee of money should company encounter financial problems?

A: We are taking risk, but company has solid financial rating.

Q: What happens if we fail to raise the \$70,000?

A: We would scale back the project.

Motion passes unanimously with one abstention.

3. Additional Business

Motion raised to spend \$200 on Carnegie Museum educational loan kits program. Executive Board endorses this as a separate line item in the budget.

Q: Are teachers engaged?

A: Need to work with teachers to pick kits, and volunteers to actually pick up kits and help us utilize these in the classrooms.

Q: Could a parent use these in the classroom on a volunteer basis?

A: Coordinate with the individual teachers. These come with teacher guide and suggestions for utilizing kits. Parents should properly plan with the teacher. Great opportunity to enrich the classroom.

Q: Is this an annual fee?

A: Yes. \$200. Can be added to next year's budget.

Motion passes unanimously.

Motion by Diane Condie on behalf of Donna Coufall to spend \$1,500 on Frick Environmental Center Partnership. Seconded by Lisa Schlar.

- David May-Stein committing \$500 of school funds.
- Last year was a pilot program. Cost is approximately \$7.50 per child.
- This would be for two first grade classes. Goal is to expand it every year.
- EB has not officially endorsed because there was no meeting time.

Q: How did we decide which first grade classes?

A: Frick has limited capacity. They would like to expand slowly and hopefully get a grant to make it K-5 in the future. We cannot do all four classes because of capacity issue. This is a starting point. Mrs. King was selected last year because of the interest she has shown. Matches the first grade science curriculum. David May-Stein made a decision about which teachers to include for this year. One other class won a coin flip. Next year go to foundations and/or grant providers to get support to expand.

Q: Could a limited part of the program be used for all four classrooms?

Self-guided portion is also available to train interested parents and teachers. Two phases to program. Parent-driven initiative. Concern is that only half of first graders will experience, but Frick wants to run full program with classes.

Q: Could classes that are going bring back materials to other classrooms?

A: We could look into it and will make a suggestion.

Q: What would a field trip for the other classes cost?

A: Approximately \$6.00 per student. That would require another motion or amendment.

Q: Could it be split among the four classes?

A: Frick is developing curriculum. David May-Stein does not want to lose continuity of program and impact. Kids can develop awareness and appreciation for ecology in an ongoing way. Frick Art Museum partnership currently exists for 15 kids in 8th grade, once per month. This reality will be faced at every level. Other two first grade classes may be able to take advantage of other opportunities should they arise. Resources are not available from Frick Environmental Center to support more than two classrooms.

Q: Could there be a lottery of all first graders?

A: Decisions have been made on who, why and how. Commitment level for each teacher must also be there to incorporate into the classroom.

Motion raised to amend from Jenny Ganger to add \$1,200 to fund field trips for other first grade classes. Seconded by Beth Tiffany.

Vigorous debate ensued.

The amendment failed during a vote. Only one yes vote was recorded.

Debate resumed on the original motion.

Q: Future plan is for all first grades?

A: No guarantee, but goal is to expand to all first grades. Frick is working to get funding to expand. It went from one to two.

Suggestion to rotate teachers in the future was raised. Some parents might try to get their kids into certain classes. David May-Stein – There is NO requesting of teachers.

Q: Of this \$2,000 total, is there any other cost to the parents?

A: No.

Q: If the parents did some cost-sharing would that change the issue of inequality.

A: Could not charge for this program.

The amendment passed unanimously, with four abstentions.

4. Jane Opgaard – PTO Budget

Ordinarily the budget for 2007-08 would have been approved last spring. Due to organizational issues, that did not happen, so we would need to do so now.

Motion is raised to approve the 2007-08 budget developed by the PTO Executive Board.

PTO Auditor Terry Kennedy commented on Jane's ability and understanding when developing the budget. Jenny Ganger had similar comments.

Q: Why are expenses higher than fundraising? Where is other PTO fundraising?

A: Fundraising will go to playground. General funds are available from past to cover. Where item is in revenue section doesn't necessarily mean where that money will be spent. New expenditures can be brought at any time. Budget can be re-opened or amended.

Motion passes unanimously with no abstentions.

5. Shannon Ewing – Fundraising

\$803 from bulb sale.

Upcoming events –

- Max & Erma's day/night on October 18. Flyers will be coming home. 20% back to Colfax.
- Cookbook sales are in progress. Already sold 128 books. Over 250 recipes submitted. Available in December.
- Bake Sale on Nov. 6 as part of Election Day. Coffee donated by Crazy Mocha.
- Barnes and Noble Day @ Waterfront on December 2 from 2-4.
- Bossa Nova event on January 12.
- Next Playground Committee Meeting is Oct. 23 @ 7:30, Make Your Mark Café.

6. Ida Simpson – Special Events

- Fiesta - Thanks to all who contributed. Special thanks to Doug Shields for his assistance.
- Latin Dance night on October 24 at 6:30 p.m. at Colfax.
- Family Movie Night – Wednesday, November 14 (via voting)
- Family Skating Night – Date TBD

7. Construction update – Shannon Ewing

- Complete details will be added here.
- Project is a little bit ahead of schedule. Plan to open on January 2.

Q: Demountables?

A: They will remain until the end of the school year, and be in use for some classes (TBD) until current cafeteria space renovation is complete. This space will be made into two second grade classrooms.

- Room preparation will begin in mid-November after each room is handed over by contractor.
- 13 classrooms in new building: Seventh, eighth, Spanish, learning support, gymnasium, cafeteria, instrumental, student services suite, vice-principal, coaches.
- Teachers have been gracious and patient without a current teacher's room, which is guaranteed by contract.
- Room 102 could possibly be moved to demountables. A separate discussion with the union present could take place.

8. Jenny Ganger – Communications

- Join the Yahoo! communications group by invitation. Only way to get e-mail information.
- Newsletter will change to Colfax Communicator and expand beyond PTO business with help from Diane Condie.
- Solicit members for newsletter/website/e-mail committee with sign-up sheet.
- Website – Getting closer to fully updating the website.

9. Diane Condie – Parent Engagement Specialist

- Spanish Workshop held in East Hills was successful. Approximately 20 participants.
- PSCC Meeting on Tuesday, Oct. 16 @ 7:00 p.m. at Colfax.
- PSCC November meeting will be on November 20 at 10:00 a.m. in East Hills. Follow-up on Moving Ahead at Colfax.
- Middle-Level Parent Advisory Council is up and running.
- Thanks to parents who completed survey.
- Next semester D.A.R.E. program will be implemented.

10. Jenny Ganger – (on behalf of Rhonda Rothman) Volunteer Coordinator

- Homeroom reps will appear in newsletter.
- Four homerooms still need reps: Brookie, Morgano, Dawson, Telesca.

Next PTO Meeting – Thursday, November 1 @ 7:00 p.m. at Colfax.

Meeting adjourned at 9:11 p.m.