

Van Hise PTO General Meeting Minutes September 8, 2015 meeting

Present: 8 board members, 10 parents, 1 faculty (Peg Keeler).

Peg Keeler presented the School Improvement Plan (SIP).

Birthday pencils (Wendy Crabb): Wendy proposed replacing the birthday bands with birthday pencils. The kids will use them, and they're not plastic. (The button maker that used to be used to make birthday buttons is broken.) 500 pencils cost \$110. After the treasurer's report, Jeff Maxted moved to approve the pencils. Dana McCloskey seconded, and the motion passed.

Treasurer's Report (Dana McCloskey): The PTO account had \$52,000 going into the 2015/2016 school year, and we have approved some expenses already. The projected budget will go online.

Last year's budget: There was no big purchase last year, but we did give Peg \$6,000 for a Chrome Book Cart - now we have 3 carts (they are much used by the 4th and 5th grade classrooms especially). Garden funds still have about \$4,000.

Last year, the After School classes made \$20,000.

We are trying to get away from parents having to buy and sell things in order to raise money.

The community fundraising event planning was taken over by new person this year, Sheryl Niede. She has already raised as much as was raised in all of last year. We made almost \$500 from the SchoolKidz supply boxes, and found out we don't have to pay for the shipping. We will see a lot of stuff come home about this.

The carnival makes a lot of money, too. This year, it's happening in January rather than February. The thing that makes the most money are the raffle and silent auction. We are recruiting new people to manage these.

Direct Appeal (Jeff Maxted): With the direct appeal, we just ask for money instead of selling things. We send a letter with a reply card - it is our fall fundraising drive and lasts through the middle of October. We use the funds from the beginning of the year, which helps us with planning. The money from the direct appeal provides teacher stipends, which about doubles what they get from the district. So the money gets pumped right back into the classrooms.

The letter will go out in the next week. Last year, we had a goal of \$13,000, but only raised about \$10,000. How can we make the letter more effective? We need to keep the drive in people's minds and remind people how important it is. This year's goal

is \$15,000. We have great opportunities this year - the extra money can go into enhancing construction, playground activities, etc. Jeff pointed out that as a new parent, he didn't know what the drive was, didn't realize it ended so early, and lost track of it. So, he asks that we all try to talk about it at the Open House and the Potlucks. The per head contribution needed to reach our goal is estimated at \$35-40.

Dana explained last year, we had 460 kids in the school. 130 families gave money on behalf of 160 kids and raised \$10,000. There are some who give small amounts, most give what's asked, and some give large amounts.

Checks should be made out to the Van Hise PTO. People can also give through Paypal. Donations are tax deductible, and are eligible for employer match. If anyone knows what employers do the match, let us know.

One consideration has been how to get it out to grandparents, and other extended families. The ability to pay online should help with that. Jeff will send out a reminder with link halfway through.

It's a one month window, so we should take the time to talk about it. Suggestions for keeping people updated on how much has been raised: a thermometer? Something to include in an email? Should we measure based on number of families who participate rather than the amount of money collected? We want to encourage everyone to contribute, so everyone can feel some ownership. Maybe a recognition of the highest numbers of participants in class? Maybe a second drive in the spring? Carnival is usually the second fundraiser that gives us a bit of a bump. But there are some big projects on the horizon this year, so a spring fund drive might be an option to help with those.

Stephanie McFarlane and Maggie Hogan expressed an interest in running the carnival. Wendy Crabb said she knows some people who would be willing to help. Now we just need two people to run the raffle and the silent auction.

Someone asked whether there was a way to send the link for ordering through Amazon to others. There is a link on the PTO web site. We generally get about \$50/mo. It has been spreading by word of mouth.

Website (Jolynne Roorda): We have a new website coming. There are pages that don't have content, so if people want to contribute written content, please talk to Jolynne. One section that could use improvement is the one for incoming families. We had talked about adding other resources. Any suggestions? How to enter the school, a map, where the main entrance is, information about where to park and what to do during inclement weather, a link to the lists of appropriate snacks, information about the walking school bus.

Along with the new web site, there will be a new format for the newsletter. It will be more like blurbs with links to longer articles.

Wendy asked for opinions about a Hedgezilla t-shirt. People seem open to the idea.

Open House planning (Wendy Crabb): The open house is not run or planned by the PTO, but Wendy suggests that it would be good for parents to hear about teaching. Wendy might try selling magnets at the open house, but will probably need some help - it would be very short shifts. The pizza needs to be figured out, also fruit. Could we get fruit from Hy-Vee? Backyard Bites has had open house as their kick-off, Wendy will talk to Chris - that's the veggie end. Then we just need pizza and water. Last year we did 2 deliveries for the pizza so that we didn't run out early.