

Van Hise PTO Meeting June 7, 2016

Present: 11 current and future board members, Peg Keeler and 3 parents.

Principal's report (Peg Keeler): Peg has two things to report. First, the Family and School Partnership plan (Peg handed out a summary of the plan). The plan looks at how to link relationships better - academic and social/emotional learning and how to build the sense of welcome and of being a family. The intent is to honor the knowledge that families have - parents are child's first teacher. On August 30, there will be a welcome back day at Van Hise with photographers; it will be an all-day event. Ready Set Go conferences will keep happening. Instead of an open house, there will be academic success nights to allow parents to experience things that their child does every day. We are also keeping 1:1 conferences. Academic success night #2 will be in February. Peg will compensate teachers for their extra time by sending them home early on a Monday (there will be no staff meeting that day). Peg tried to think about, "what is purpose of open house" - wanted to make it a time where families get to know a lot of the things you typically learn about in a conference and tried to keep conferences about individual children. Fall conferences will be about setting goals, academic and social/emotional, with your child. They will still allow parent/teacher time, too. Fall conferences will be teacher-run, spring conferences will be student-run. Spring will be a time to check in on progress toward the students' goals. Academic success nights will replace the grade level potlucks. Peg has been counting on the funding from those and from open house for these nights. \$700 had been set aside for open house, \$1200 for potlucks (still needs to be voted on).

Peg's second topic is school improvement goals. The theme for this year's goals is "families as partners." The theme will continue into next year. We met all our goals this school year. The district asks that the school set a goal for Fall ½ - benchmark (PALS). PALS is new; small number. MAP is the measure the district uses for elementary. It is an indication of where kids are in the fall, winter, and spring and helps show trends, allowing teachers to see most-missed items on the test. The MAP test is set up to keep getting harder until the kids can't answer the questions anymore. We met our overall proficiency goal. Looking at growth, we made it to 66%, and our goal was 64%. Effective teams are really helpful, looking for kids that need help, really working with them. Van Hise will be featured in the district annual report.

Peg invited questions. There were none. Peg is aiming for 100%. What happens from here? We re-set our goals. The big group comes together, re-sets goals in August at an institute run by Jen Cheatham; all schools in the district are there. They coach schools to go up by 5% for proficiency, 10-15% for growth. MAP is always used for school improvement planning, while the Forward exam is used for state

accountability and report cards for the schools - it is more summative. Kids found Forward to be easier than MAP.

There is a plan to cooperate with Hamilton to create a family resource center to start to address some needs that families have.

PTO board election (Wendy Crabb): Carrie moves to accept the slate of candidates, Afan seconded. Discussion: someone noted that there is an incoming K parent on the list. VOTE: passes unanimously.

Treasurer report (Dana McCloskey): General overview: things are looking pretty good in terms of writing last minute checks. Dana hasn't had time to go over it in detail - she'll share the final budget later. She asks, is the \$5,000 stop gap for next year an annual thing, or one-time - it will be one-time, but we may vote again depending on what the budget looks like for next year. We do have some carryover cash, but there's a concern that we're spending more in next year's budget than we're bringing in in income. We can't keep doing that, particularly if we want to give money for the playground. We have never specifically set aside money for the playground construction. It's the operational budget that's going to be \$3,000 too much, not the carryover. Some things to think about for next year, to address the potential gap between income and spending: we could reduce the amounts of the grants - that's really the only place where we have wiggle room. This year, of the \$20,000 we allocated for grants, we spent \$18,000. Jeff Maxted pointed out one thing to keep in mind as we talk about the current overage, is that the current deficit that we're running is based on the idea that we'll bring in the same amount of money next year as we did this year. But we might question whether we should have a \$40,000 cushion - we should be using the money that comes in. Dana suggests carrying over about \$10,000. Carousel remembers that the PTO used to fund one big thing each year. In recent years, we knew that we wanted to focus on the playground, so we didn't do a big project. Last year, we had planned on spending \$25,000 for the library, then we ended up spending only \$4,000, because the district bought the furniture that the PTO had thought we'd need to buy. We haven't allocated any money for the stage. If we're going to think about the stage and the playground, Dana suggests that \$25,000 for both playground and stage would be a responsible amount, and would still leave us some cushion in case we run into something next year. Also there will be grants to consider. Next year the district will start focusing on nature based play. Dana thought about using the fall fund drive as specifically for the playground - it's nice to have a specific goal. We've kept the playground out in the past. It would be a shift, but might make sense because it would be crystal clear where people's money would be spent. [There was more discussion about doing the fall fund drive for the playground.] If we use the \$25,000 now, we'll have to ask for money for the more nebulous and harder to cheer on things. Dana thinks we could do both. The fall fund drive usually brings in \$10,000. The \$25,000 would leave us money in case the fall fund drive doesn't come through. Money from the after school classes is always big, too.

If you look at the list of donated experiences from the teachers, it's clear that they really want a new playground. Since it's important to our teachers, Wendy suggests that we should get something started this year, if only to honor the teachers who put forth the effort to donate. We'll see how much we raise at tomorrow's playground fundraiser, too. ZDA was paid for marketing help, and also donated in-kind help for the community night where the playground plans were presented. Dana estimates that we have about \$40,000 in the bank, uncommitted (including accounting for the deficit). Jeff suggests that's a good place to start the conversation. We can set aside less money for the grants next year if need be.

Stage: Afan got a picture of what the stage at Hawthorne looks like - it folds up against the wall, similar to a murphy bed. The Hawthorne music teacher doesn't use it anymore, since it is hollow underneath and therefore very loud. They also need to wheel out stairs to use it, and it's not big enough. If that's the stage, it might not be useful, plays will be very different from what they have been - no curtain, etc. MMSD says that PTO could fund an extension. Are they definitely doing something? Do we have to make a decision? Mike Brown says that they're moving ahead, but no confirmation from Mike Hertting. They'll be taking out the stage. The music teachers suggested resurfacing the stage and putting tables up there, if it's all about more eating space. They're planning to just tear it out and replace it. Afan points out that there's a legal obligation to do what was in the referendum. Question whether it's a wise use of taxpayer dollars to replace something that is used now with something that wouldn't be used. So, is there another option that we could fund? Afan thinks resurfacing the stage makes sense. We had this discussion earlier, and the question is that the surface is really bad, the tables would tend to be in the way. Wendy moves that we take the stage out of the conversation. She is not willing to fund a murphy bed stage. The stage is also a bigger deal for Hamilton. VHE should have an outdoor stage. Someone pointed out that there are better stages out there. Stephanie suggests pushing the district on it and point out that they're not following the referendum. Question - is it now or never? I.e., is there a timeframe where we can put something together with a real stage? Should we have the blank slate for now? Is now our only chance to have the old stage removed? Dana agrees we should take it out of the money discussion for now, since we don't really know all the options, we only know we don't want the murphy bed option. Can we find out how much it costs, so we can say how much they were going to spend and how much we'd save? [NOTE: Afan communicated with the district and sent the PTO board a follow up email to this discussion on June 8, indicating that the demolition of the old stage would begin in a matter of days, and that the district had already committed via the referendum to spend the \$24,000 on the new stage, therefore there is nothing that the VHE PTO can do aside from attempting to make improvements to the new stage, such as creating buffers to reduce the noise from the hollow stage. Options for keeping the old stage would not work.]

Someone suggested voting on putting money toward playground. Jeff suggested: with knowledge that there's a fundraiser tomorrow night, and that phase I of the playground will cost \$40,000, Jeff suggests pledging what we have available in the

PTO budget minus what's raised tomorrow night, to fully fund phase I. If we get \$5,000 tomorrow, then the PTO would donate \$35,000. The purpose of that proposal would be to walk out of here tonight knowing that Phase I will be funded. Dana suggests that regardless of what happens tomorrow, we make sure phase I is fully funded. Dana asks if we're going for grants from outside organizations to help pay for the playground. Carousel says Kristin is in charge of that (Kristin was not at the meeting). Shelby asks if the Nature-Based play section will be started this summer. There may be grants in MMSD for that, though they wouldn't be big. Hill Farms Association is willing to give between \$2,000-5,000. Midvale Heights may also give some. If we can be a model for nature-based play, is that an incentive for someone to give us grants or other types of donations? Who can take on the task of inquiring at the district for money? Kristin? What about contacting a contractor who does nature-based play, then we can be a model for other schools. That's what ZDA has been doing - they're the landscape architect for a lot of places in the district. The MMSD person who does playgrounds (Chad) is telling us how to get grants, but suggests not working through MMSD because it will slow things down.

Stephanie moves to proceed with Dana's plan and fully fund phase I of the playground this summer. Eileen seconds. VOTE: Passes unanimously.

After School Classes (Jolynne Roorda): She is moving after school classes to primarily online and asking people to use PayPal, but there will be a per-transaction fee. It would amount to about \$1,000/year total. Jolynne suggests adding the transaction fee on top of the fee for the class, like a convenience fee. What is the reason for the fee? If you don't want people to write checks, charging to not write checks would work against that. It's a question of having a paper copy of the form vs. online. It will be easier for the treasurer if it's Paypal. Afan points out one issue that comes up is that if you're returning money, they'll freeze your account (PTO) for 60 days. Afan suggests caution. [There was some discussion about how Paypal works.]

Jolynne moves to add a fee to After School Class fees to cover the Paypal transaction fee. Afan seconds. Discussion: would you have to tell parents the amount of the additional fee? Can people register online and then pay by check? (Yes) The extra fee will be \$1.50-\$2.50 per transaction. VOTE: passes unanimously.

Fund raising (Sherry Nields): Rock and Jump finally responded (thanks to Trish) about the money from the event there in the fall. Sherry said that the day only brought in \$42, but that they will add in some extra money for interest/ as an inconvenience fee. They were very apologetic.

Finally, the PTO said goodbye to Dana and wished her well in Vermont.