

Van Hise Elementary PTO Board Meeting Minutes August 26, 2014

Next meeting: September 9, 2014, Van Hise cafeteria

Present: Board members: Carousel Bayrd, Dana McCloskey, Kristin Ruedi-Krause, Shelby Connell, Jolynne Roorda, Eileen Snyder, Heidi Weitzman.

Events and other beginning-of-the-year business. Welcome breakfast: Carousel is all ready for the breakfast. Kristin and Heidi are making muffins, and Jen Roth will also bring muffins. Shelby will show Carousel where the bin of supplies is.

Potlucks: We still need one more volunteer to help with the 4th grade potluck. Dana will pick up the potluck supplies at the same time she picks up Open House supplies.

Classroom representatives: Kindergarten is taken care of. Carousel will wait until about the third week of school to communicate with the teachers who still do not have a classroom rep. We'll operate under the assumption that we won't have representatives for every classroom by the September PTO meeting; we'll try to recruit people at that meeting. After that, we'll figure out where there are still holes and strategize for October. There are probably a lot of people who don't know about the classroom reps, so an email on the 3rd or 4th day of school should be helpful.

Email list: Shelby has all the emails they were given entered (the forms parents fill out for the teachers with their email addresses had a checkbox giving the PTO permission to use the emails to communicate with the parents. Shelby and Jolynne will sit down with Ann Jesse-Schwabe to collect any remaining emails. Shelby would like to have a solid email list by October 1.

First General PTO Meeting. The people in charge of events and fundraising efforts will give brief presentations at the first PTO meeting, with a goal of letting people know about what's happening as well as recruiting volunteers. Shelby has contacted the fund raising people, Kristin has contacted the events people. There are 3 confirmed speakers so far: Mary will talk about the talent show, Afan will talk about Science Night, Jolynne will talk about the carnival. They'll send out a reminder this week to those who haven't signed up to speak yet. Kristin will make a sheet for volunteers to sign up on. Beth Cantwell won't be there to talk about the art fair. Dana will talk about the raffle and silent auction. We still need to get a hold of someone for multicultural night, the book fair, the dance, Backyard Bites, and the teacher appreciation group. Shelby and Kristin will work on contacting the people in charge of these events.

Someone suggested having a volunteer coordinator. Shelby will draw up a description of the job and run it by Kristin and Heidi. She does not want the volunteer coordinator's job to overlap with what the events coordinators do.

Playground. Carousel will talk about the playground at the September 9 meeting.

Mrs. Keeler sent an email from the district about the playground. We need to get their approval, but the district seemed to think we were asking for money. We were not asking for funding from them, only approval.

The playground group will meet with teachers next, then will report back to the PTO.

Newsletter. The newsletter will be posted, with links, on the PTO website.

Backyard bites. Three 5th grade volunteers are still needed for the first backyard bites snack. An email will go out on Wednesday asking for volunteers (kids and parents). The first snack will be salad turnips.

PTO board voting policy. Shelby brought up the question of what kinds of issues require a vote from the PTO board. Generally, any new event that will be “sponsored by the PTO,” particularly if it costs money needs to be voted on. Over the summer, Jolynne and Rachel talked about “branding” – a new logo, brochure, website. Should the PTO board be voting on those things? We should set some protocols.

In the by-laws, there are no specific amounts tied to anything. The officers vote on the budget. In order to set funding, it has to be in that original budget. The original budget approval is at the first Tuesday meeting, so we need any requests the Thursday or Friday before. The budget can be amended. Anything that was in the budget last year is in the budget.

Shelby has talked to PTO representatives from other schools. Some PTO’s set a threshold, for example \$100, under which a proposal only needs 3 votes to pass. Larger amounts require a vote by the entire board. If we’re adding anything that’s pure expense, should we reduce spending elsewhere by an equal amount? Dana pointed out that 2% of the budget goes to operations; if this increases by even \$1,000, the total percentage spent on operations will still be fairly small. The big difference this year is that there is a lot of new energy on the board, bringing new ideas that aren’t in the budget yet.

Two of the new ideas are the brochure (communications) and the 5k run. The 5k is a bit of a risk because we don’t know yet if it will raise funds or not. It’s possible it won’t raise money the first year.

The website (\$125) and the brochure (\$150) are in the budget, but there are other small things that come up, like business cards with events on one side and PTO contact info on the other (\$40). If communications has a budget, then if this kind of thing is within that budget, no further approval would be needed. If it’s outside that budget, approval would be necessary.

The board suggested that Communications could be given a budget of \$500 to cover their expenses. If more is needed, Jolynne and Rachel would come to the board and request more money. Jolynne will talk to Rachel to get a better idea of the amount they need and will get back to Dana by September 4.

Shelby asks if we should consider re-working the by-laws about this process. The board agrees, but concerns were raised that the new process might create extra work, particularly if a project goes over budget. Last year, both the open house (pizza) and the 5th grade graduation required budget adjustments, and these were agreed on through a conversation between Shelby and Dana. It was suggested that one way to deal with this kind of situation is to remind event organizer of their budget. Another suggestion was to set an allowable % for going over budget.

The board then talked about imaging, the logo, and the website. What should the board have input on? We have a volunteer designing t-shirts. If he's volunteering, is it really fair to demand approval? On the other hand, what if the design of the t-shirts (or something similar) didn't meet our expectations? Content should be approved by the board, but the design should be left up to the person doing the work.

For the website, we have one chance to get everything we want into it. Multiple sets of eyes and input from multiple sources should help – again, only about the content, not the design.

We don't want to drive people away from volunteering, but generally, materials that represent the PTO should be approved at some level.

Shelby suggested that Jolynne put together a description of what, generally, will be in the website, and get approval of that content. Jolynne pointed out that adding a page here and there to a website is not hard.

At the next business meeting (following the first general meeting), we will be presenting the budget. We can't have people leave that one.

The goal for the newsletter is to go live with the online version in October, so any brainstorming should happen soon. We could add a website discussion, keeping it very general and content oriented – the presentation of the vision. It's an informational site, not a functional site.

Grant process. Teachers get their grant applications to Shelby, then she creates a spreadsheet with the information to send to the board. The board then ranks the requests and discusses them. Board members have a week to respond. The grants are awarded after the direct appeal. There's no particular cap on the requests. How long should the timeframe be for responding? 1 week? 3 days? If we know ahead of time that it's coming, the turnaround time can be tighter. The main thing is to communicate and make sure things happen at the school.

Calendar. Can we move the direct appeal? It's generally sent out during the second week of school, and runs for 4 weeks. That gives us about a month to know what money we'll have so that we have the information when the grants come up. REAP runs from about Oct. 20-Nov. 10. The concern is that if we move the direct appeal, things might get lost in the shuffle.

The goal would be to get everything assembled and ready to be put in mailboxes by Thursday, September 11. Jolynne says this will work. The board voted, and the direct appeal has been moved to run from September 15-October 10.

Hedgie gear. Jen Roth has proposed that the design be due 10/1 and in her dad's hands, so that sales can start on 10/10 or 10/17, with a goal of having the products available by 11/10. We might be able to do a December sale, too. The board agrees that it's ok to have all of these things happening together.

Brochure. The board discussed the brochure that will be included with the direct appeal. We offered some suggestions to Jolynne, who will incorporate the suggestions and send out a new draft via for board approval, with a goal of getting all feedback by the end of the day Wednesday (8/27). Then Jolynne can get it to the printer on Thursday, 8/28. The paper for the brochure will be glossy, and it will come folded.