

Van Hise Elementary PTO General 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), Faculty (Peg Keeler, Wendy Zucker, JoAnn Reicke, Mary Butler, Theresa Miller) + 9 parents.

Principal's Report (Peg Keeler)

Peg gave a brief overview of some of the new things that will be happening this year and some of the news from over the summer:

- The outdoor classroom has received some grant money, to support garden based learning and updates, and to support art in the garden.
- The students will be working with a visiting artist to make a school-wide mosaic.
- Van Hise has joined "Welcoming Schools for Gender Spectrum," a group of schools who are welcoming to the LGBTQ community.
- The achievement gap at Van Hise and in the district has begun to close, although it remains a challenge.

Peg then took questions from parents at the meeting.

- Is there any news about questions of increasing capacity at Van Hise?
 - Van Hise is a thriving, but crowded school. We are at 105%-108% capacity. We have 2 doubled-up classrooms, the library is also the computer lab and has some office space. But it's the people that matter.
 - Van Hise will need more space at some point. The Madison School Board met on August 25 to look at the issue again. There might be a referendum in April. The school board plans to seek community input before proceeding. It has been determined that changing boundaries is not an option for Van Hise. One possible approach would be to add a new LMC, located on the Waukesha side of the school, in the Hamilton parking lot. It would be 2 stories, one for Van Hise, one for Hamilton. That approach would free up 2 classrooms and the chorus room for Van Hise. But it is only a preliminary idea at this point, and there is a whole process that needs to happen before decisions are made.
 - School District has data indicating the enrollment at Van Hise/Hamilton is going to shrink, but that data may not be accurate, considering the new apartment building going in across from the DOT building.
 - Van Hise had approximately 15 new students enroll unexpectedly, but with other students leaving, we are still at just over 400 students, similar to last year.

PTO Board Introductions and Overview

The PTO Board introduced themselves. Shelby gave a brief rundown of events for the 2014/2015 school year:

- October: Open House
- November: Book Fair
- December: no PTO sponsored events, but the K/1 teachers organize a parents night out
- January: School Dance
- February: Carnival
- March: Multicultural Night
- April: Science Night
- May: Art and Craft Fair; Talent Show
- June: Ice Cream Social

Events. Summer Kindergarten playdates: Carousel reported that the 4 playdates held over the summer were a success. She found that some parents ended up emailing her to ask her questions about things like registration, because they had her email.

Carousel also talked about classroom representatives. Classroom reps were new last year, and their role was not fully defined. This year, there will be more specific information provided to the reps about what the role entails. She estimates that it will be about 5 hours of work per month. She says that all of the kindergarten classrooms have a representative and there are others who have volunteered in other grades, but there are still classrooms in need of a representative.

The grade level potlucks, new this year, are meant to provide an opportunity for parents to get to know each other and their kids' classmates. Each grade has been assigned an evening, and the shelter at Rennebohm Park has been reserved for those nights from 5:00-8:00 pm. The PTO will provide dessert.

Every year, the PTO uses any money not allocated to other purposes during the year for a big project. In the past, for example, the PTO has purchased new or upgraded technology for the classrooms. This year, we plan to work for a new playground, and the unallocated money might be put toward the playground, although that will depend on what other needs arise. A playground committee has been formed, and it is in its very early stages. The committee's next step will be to meet with the teachers. The committee plans to get input from everyone, including the students.

Benefit Nights. Shelby reported that this year, benefit nights are set up at Pasqual's and the Great Dane; we are just waiting for final confirmation.

Activity Fair. Shelby presented an overview of an idea for a vendor or activity fair. A date has tentatively been set up in January for the fair, but we still need someone to head it up. The way it would work is that we would invite vendors who provide summer (or other extracurricular) activities for kids to pay a fee to have a table at the vendor fair. Parents would then come to get information about activities and summer camps their kids can participate in.

Events Co-Coordinators. Kristin and Heidi will give a presentation about events at the next meeting, providing opportunities for people to volunteer.

Treasurer's Report. Dana presented that total deposits in 2013/2014 were about \$55,000 (note that some of that money was already designated for a specific purpose when it came in, so it went back out again right away). The PTO spent around \$40,000. Some of that money has not been spent yet, but there is some discussion about what to do with it (technology for the classrooms, money for the playground, etc.)

Sources of income:

- After School Classes: \$8,000 profit
- Fundraising Events - Art Fair & Carnival: \$9,000 profit
- Community Fundraising Events (Great Dane, Serrv, etc): \$2,000 profit
- Straight donations (e.g., ordering from Amazon through the link on the PTO link): \$900
- Fall Fund Drive: over \$13,000
- School spirit products (t-shirts, etc.): \$300
- Donation from Hill Farms Neighborhood Association for the visiting artist: \$250
- Donation from a VHE parent for the visiting artist: \$1,000

The garden had about \$2,000 in its budget. The garden budget is separate from the general PTO budget, but the PTO holds the budget for the garden committee. Currently there is \$3,064.39 in the garden fund.

PTO expenses:

- Teacher grants (teachers apply for funds from the PTO), and annual stipend (about \$200 per teacher to be used for classroom expenses): 51%
- Fundraising & Community Events (carnival, winter dance, open house, etc): 8%
- After School Classes and School Programs (healthy snack, safety patrol, etc) account for about 20%
- General Board Meeting expenses (babysitting, postage, etc.) about 2%
- Garden spending of 3%
- Remaining 16% of spending is the in/out expenses of sales that move through the PTO budget (scholastic book fair, REAP, etc.)

Fundraising for the playground will be completely separate from fundraising for the PTO.

The PTO needs around \$40,000 each year, but we generally use any leftover funds for big projects.

Outdoor classroom. Chris Frakes gave an overview of the Van Hise outdoor classroom. There is a garden committee consisting of about 10 parents who make decisions about the garden and arrange for volunteers. This year, they would like to have a garden parent for every classroom. The first meeting of the garden group is Friday, September 5, at 8:40 am in the garden.

The garden group also sets up the after school class that takes place in the garden. The class is generally held on Monday afternoons. The garden group finds someone to teach the class; they think they have found someone for this school year. They are planning to plant perennial berries.

The newsletter has a garden section.

Backyard Bites. This program started about 2 years ago. The whole school has a common snack of local, seasonal produce. It is a way to both introduce kids to vegetables they might not otherwise try, and to teach the kids about the kinds of foods that grow in Wisconsin. The first Backyard Bites snack for the year will be distributed on September 10, with prep happening on September 9. The group would like to find volunteers to act as grade level sponsors – both students and parents. The goal will be to deliver the snack by 9:30. The prep time for the snack is generally about an hour.

Teacher representatives. Each grade level has one teacher representative who will come to PTO meetings. For 2014/2015, they are: JoAnn Riecke (Kindergarten); Mary Butler (1st grade); Wendy Zucker (2nd grade); and Theresa Miller (4th grade). Katie Mahr will be able to represent 5th grade at some of the meetings. Right now, there is no 3rd grade teacher representative available.