

## Van Hise Elementary PTO Board Meeting Minutes September 9, 2014

Present: 7 board members, 2 staff (Peg Keeler and Shari Nelson, IRT), and 24 parents.

NEXT MEETING: October 14, 2014, 6:30 pm, Van Hise cafeteria

**Summary of PTO activity:** Kristin led a presentation of events sponsored by the PTO for the 2014/2015 school year. Many of the activities need volunteers and some need new coordinators.

### Events:

Book fair, November 10-12

School Dance, January 23, 6-8 pm, theme: "Let Yourselves Glow"

Carnival, February 20

Multicultural Night, March 20 – The committee is looking for people to volunteer this year, so they can learn the ropes to take over next year

Science Night, April 14

Arts and Crafts Fair, May 2

Talent Show, May 15 - We will need a new co-coordinator for next year.

### Committees:

Garden committee: This year the committee will look at working with classrooms and working with teachers to figure out their needs. Some classrooms needed 1 project for the year, others had someone come in weekly. Garden volunteers generally work during the day.

Teacher appreciation: Donna Stark and Deanna Stadler are the current chairs, but we will need new chairs for next year. Donna and Deanna would like people to shadow them. Teacher appreciation week is May 4-8 this year. It includes a luncheon, which will need volunteers to help with cleanup and setup. Other activities include: Flowers, Hugs, and High-fives (kids are encouraged to give their teacher a flower, a hug, or a high-five) and thank-you cards from the kids. The committee also brings in a massage therapist and an acupuncturist. A team of volunteers spruces up the staff bathrooms.

Backyard Bites: There is one snack per month. Volunteers prepare snacks and distribute them to classrooms. The snacks are local, seasonal Wisconsin foods. The first snack is September 10, and will be ground cherries.

### PTO Fundraising activities:

Direct appeal

Benefit nights (families eat at Pasquals and/or the Great Dane, and the restaurants donate some percentage of the nights profits to VHE)

REAP: An opportunity to purchase local food and other products, with a percentage of sales going to the school. The REAP coordinators will need volunteers on December 7, to sort the products and stick around while people pick up their orders.

Box tops for education – There are 2 contests each year, where classrooms compete to see who can bring in the most boxtops. Volunteers are needed to help cut out the box tops, and a co-coordinator is needed.

Labels for education – This is similar to boxtops, but the school gets products instead of money.

Terracycle – We send in stuff for them to upcycle, and the school gets paid for it

Amazon program: click on link from PTO website to have a donation go to VHE when you purchase items on Amazon.

Community building events:

Yearbook: The yearbook includes pictures taken throughout the school year, plus some kids' artwork. Volunteers are needed for order processing (January/February – April). Volunteers are also needed to take photos at events and collect photos from teachers.

Newsletter

5<sup>th</sup> grade graduation

Directory

Hedgie gear

Walking school bus

Walk and roll program

After school classes

The PTO is looking for a volunteer coordinator.

Possible new event/fundraiser: an Activity Fair, where organizations who offer kids activities (summer camp, extracurricular sports/arts, etc.) pay to have a table at the fair to provide information about their groups. BUT, we need someone to coordinate the fair, or it won't happen. The job would consist of finding vendors to participate and writing letters, as well as creating a flier and supervising the day of the event.

Classroom Representative: We'd like a parent in every classroom to act as that classroom's voice on PTO. Right now, we have about representatives for about 1/3 of the classrooms.

**Mrs. Keeler gave a presentation about the Van Hise School Improvement Plan.**

See <https://vanhise.files.wordpress.com/2014/10/vhe-sip-input-session-fall2014.pptx> for the PowerPoint slides from her presentation, including statistics and goals for the school.

## **Business meeting.**

The board discussed having sign-up sheets for volunteer opportunities available at the Open House in October.

**Dana presented the budget.** The PTO has about \$34,000 in bank currently. The reason there is such a large amount right now is that for the past several years, the PTO has purchased a big ticket item (technology, for example), but in the 2013/2014 school year, there was no such large purchase. There will be a large purchase in 2014/2015, but we are not sure if it will be more because of the lack of a big purchase last year.

The budget that Dana passed out is to let community know where the money comes from and where it goes. Fundraising is 53% of income, not including the direct appeal (that's counted under "ongoing donations").

There are a few things that have not yet been paid for, for example, Time for Kids, National Geographic magazine, and some reading materials.

The amount available for teacher grants in 2014/2015 is \$36,000.

Shelby reported that the school district is requiring teachers participate in more professional activities outside the school day, but that the money will most likely be coming from Mrs. Keeler's/Van Hise's budget (rather than the district). This additional expense will may lead to the school budget being under pressure, and Mrs. Keeler may need to ask the PTO to help cover other sundry expenses (NOT salary-related costs). There was a discussion about the district's practice of using zero-based budgeting (schools' budgets are based on what they need, rather than on what they used in the previous school year).

PTO budget breakdown:

64% goes to grants and teacher stipends.

3% fundraising

4% community building

8% sales in/out (money that comes in from sales, then goes out again immediately to cover costs from sales)

2% REAP

Afan noted that federal funding for outreach for the sciences has shrunk in the last year or two, making it more difficult for outside groups (e.g., scientists from the UW) to come to VHE science night. He requested that the budget for Science Night be increased, based on the premise that these groups will be asking for higher fees for participating in Science Night. There was a discussion about the purpose of Science Night – is it more about the students, or the outside groups, or both together? Would it make sense to have the outside groups on a separate night? And, how many of the outside groups do we pay? In Spring 2014, we paid two groups, the physics people

and the herpetologists. Afan will ask the groups if they will do Science Night for \$100 each. The request is tabled until Afan can find out how much money is needed to bring in the outside groups; he will bring it back in front of the board at the next PTO business meeting.

MOTION to pass budget (Sarah), SECONDED (Jolynne). The budget was passed unanimously.

### **Website.**

Jolynne Roorda is working on redesigning the PTO website, and moving it away from a WordPress blog format. She is reorganizing the site and expanding some content. Possible content she presented to the board: a section with information for new families; pages for individual programs; either signup genius links (a free service that allows people to sign up for volunteer shifts for various events online) or possibly having sign ups right on site going to people in charge of events; there is the possibility of doing the newsletter as blog.

Jolynne asked those present for their wishlist for the blog. Ideas that were mentioned were: Making the garden blog more visible, getting the 3 websites (VHE PTO site, VHE individual school site, and School District site) working together better. The school has new website, too, with new content. Jolynne will try to be sure the two sites compliment each other. For PTO events, Jolynne talked about doing a calendar with a link to the event page, with contact information for people in charge of each event, or barring that, contact info for Kristin and Heidi. Getting groups to do their content might be challenging, but hopefully once they see it, they'll get into it.

Someone suggested including a collection of resources for kids, for advanced learners, kids with IEP's, tutoring opportunities, sharing of resources. Posting things on behalf of community groups (but making it clear that the PTO was not necessarily endorsing those groups). Providing a link to the Kahn Academy website. The library has online things you can do; apps and other online things. It was suggested that the PTO do a poll of teachers to find out what online resources they like. We are not sure we can link to classrooms – we might be required to go through the school's website, rather than through the PTO site. Another possibility is to give people search terms, for example a teacher's name, instead of just links to pages. But, if teachers are doing that more, may not need to do it on the PTO. In 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, there is now a website that replaces weekly newsletter.

It was pointed out that a lot of school-related questions get asked on the Hill Farms Facebook page. Some of these can get asked/answered on the PTO Facebook page. The board may need to have a separate discussion about our Facebook page: should it be more of a dialog, or what it is now (mainly posting events)? We'd need an active community, someone looking at the page, monitor it.

It was suggested that people could email questions, then have someone answer them on Facebook? Be mindful that the info will have to be vetted/somehow confirmed that it's correct.