

# Van Hise Elementary PTO General Meeting Minutes

## January 6, 2015

Present: 7 board members, 9 parents, and 2 faculty.

NEXT MEETING: February 3, 2015, VHE Cafeteria (How to help your child with math at home)

### **Principal's Report**

Mrs. Keeler was unable to attend the meeting, so Shelby passed along her updates to the group.

- The January newsletter hasn't gone out yet, but it will go out soon.
- The survey results from student-led conferences were overall positive, with some requests for more balance between having time to talk to the teachers with and without the students present.
- In January, there will be a couple of performances for kids to see: 1) Yonam Dance Troup, and 2) the Hamilton Middle Schoolers will do Cinderella
- January's PBS theme is focus and attention
- Pajama day will be Friday 1/9
- For the February PTO meeting, Peg is working on getting MMSD staff and teachers from each grade to do something on math instruction.

Questions from the group: When will we hear about how/if parent/teacher conferences will be changing? Shelby guesses we'll hear a little in advance, but probably not a whole lot. Not sure how much will change before spring, but they may look at changing it for next fall. The spring conference is in March, so we will probably hear in February sometime what the format will be.

### **Updates from Shelby**

The Facilities referendum is moving forward, it will be out in April. Shelby got email from someone from the district today saying they'll come talk to groups of parents in February or March. The talk can be opened up to the wider community. The February topic is taken, so we will plan it for March and try to open it up to Hill Farms and Midvale Heights. Shelby will try to get the cafeteria for the meeting, and will talk to Peg about how to get it rolling. We will need to spread the word.

Carousel notes that there are two groups forming - an MMSD group, and also an advocacy group to pull people from each school to develop literature, get canvassers, etc. The advocacy group, completely separate from MMSD, is being formed by the elected members of the school board. Shelby noted that MMSD can provide information, but can't campaign for or against the referendum.

### **Financial update**

Dana passed out sheets with the budget summary. Right now, we have about \$18,000 unspent at the end of the year. There have been discussions with the garden group about having a pavilion for an outdoor classroom, which might be a candidate for some of this unspent money (the grow grant won't cover the cost of the pavilion). In addition, we've reached almost entire income we expected from the full year of after school classes already (about \$9,000 out of \$10,000 has been collected), and there are 2 more rounds of After School Classes (about 6 classes) to come. Also, the check for Pasqual's Night arrived.

### **Volunteer update**

Shelby asked if Jodi needs anything, Jodi said no. Shelby asked about having volunteer signup sheets at events, so that volunteers can sign in when they do their shift. It's probably not needed for the dance, since we handle that more verbally - the three volunteer/event people can work together to organize that. A list of people who showed up to volunteer would help with thank-yous, because sometimes people show up to volunteer without signing up ahead of time; a sign up sheet would ensure we have their contact information.

Benefits: SERVV and Pasquals generated \$500. February 9 will be Great Dane night. The 5<sup>th</sup> graders will be doing a performance on the "new" side (with the pool tables) at the Great Dane that night.

### **Backyard Bites/Green Team**

Chris Frakes reports Backyard Bites and Green Team are going great. They have lots of volunteers. Having classes sponsor Backyard Bites has been working great. For the next snack, they'll be doing Sugar River Dairy yogurt. Sugar River will send someone from the company to talk to classes. The kids liked the raw sweet potatoes from an earlier snack.

The Grow Grant is a continuing process with lots of feedback and synthesizing the information. Teaching staff is interested in a pavilion with a table. The Green Team is trying to figure out how to fund it. Pavilions can cost between \$10,000 and \$20,000, depending. The Green Team is figuring out what they can get donated.

All-school sustainability project: The Green Team is thinking of having kids recycle their milk cartons, or they may try a turn-off the lights campaign or a no idling campaign. They will be seriously campaigning in the next few months for volunteers to help build a new garden at the Kindergarten end of the building. If the referendum goes through, the current garden may become a parking lot. The team would like the garden to be integrated into the playground, paths, etc. It will be circular with different themed sections, etc.

### **Carnival Update**

The carnival coordinators had a kick-off meeting in December. Jolynne and Kristin are taking over this year for the first time. They've decided to choose a theme - Mardi Gras. They will keep it simple, with purple gold green decorations, some new

signs. They're trying to add a new game this year - Plinko. Another change is that they will be using outside volunteers for everything except games. Game captains will get information about their games right away, and there will be online sign-up only. People can go to their game captains if they have problems with online signup. Kristin gave LèAndrea a sheet with her volunteer needs for carnival. Mary and Julia (previous carnival organizers) are helping out behind the scenes, advising.

Raffle: Dana is in the process of starting to do the raffle/get donations. Jeff Schmidt has a carnival donation for Dana, too. The raffle licence is ordered; we will sell iPad raffle tickets, maybe others, too, at Great Dane night. Is it also worth selling game and food tickets as well, to avoid some of the big lines? Concerns were raised about people wanting refunds. Agreed that we can sell the iPad tickets at Great Dane to everyone who's there, regardless of whether they're Van Hise families.

Baskets: Silent auction was started in order to create something outside the raffle to generate excitement and allow people to bid high if they want. We made \$2,000 last year (the first year of the baskets), deemed it a success. Emails about baskets will be coming soon. Each classroom makes a basket. Carousel and Dana talked about suggesting that baskets shouldn't be worth more than \$300. They noted that baskets with stuff focused on adults were really popular; the kid stuff was less popular. Each rep can do what they feel comfortable with. One of the more popular baskets was Ms. Ludwig's last year, and it had \$70 worth of stuff. Do what works with your class/teacher. We try to find a balance with what we ask of parents; some parents might feel overdone, others love it. Carousel will send out a list of ideas - just suggestions. She will aim for getting an email out on Monday. She does suggest sharing ideas with Carousel and Dana so there's not duplication; There wasn't a huge problem with that last year, but it did cause a little bit of confusion.

The February meeting may not have a business meeting; if it does, it'll be short, so watch email and backpack mail for more information about the carnival. For carnival-related questions, contact Kristin and Jolynne; for the raffle and baskets, contact Dana and Carousel. There was some discussion about whether classroom reps should be the game captains, in addition to coordinating classroom baskets. The job of game captain sounds like a lot, but really it's the easiest job. Most captains will be looking for 5 volunteers. It might be helpful for the room reps to help find a game captain. Do we have someone doing outreach to classes who don't have room reps? Kristin will send out game assignments to the classroom reps, and the classroom reps will find captains.

### **Vendor Fair**

Jeff Schmidt reported on his and Shelley's efforts to pull the vendor fair together. He reported good news and bad news. Good news: they sent out 90 letters to organizations in early December. They filled in gaps in their vendor list; a lot of organizations we contact for the carnival are different than organizations they wanted to approach for the vendor fair. It was a database building project. The deadline is officially tomorrow (January 7). Organizations registered and with their

fee (\$100) paid by the deadline would have a table confirmed. At the time of the meeting, there were 9 confirmed participants. Nice mix of organization types so far. What it tells us is if we reach a good number of participants, it could work; not sure it'll work this year. So, we need to figure out how many vendors we need to make it really work, and decide when we have to make the go/no go decision. Some organizations complained that the fee is too high. For some organizations, it's no big deal, but some are non-profit and won't want to pay that much. So, in the future, should we consider charging some groups less, or allowing some in free (e.g., the library). Jeff suggested extending deadline, sending out reminder, and maybe reducing the fee (we'd reimburse groups who already paid). He suggested that if we get about 20, then we go for it. If not, then we cancel it. We don't want to do it if we don't have enough vendors, or people won't come next year. Dana questioned whether 20 vendors is enough if we're marketing it to 2000 kids and their families? (We planned to market to Midvale, Stevens, Crestwood, and Shorewood.) Shelby reported that her friend, who is the PTO president at Midvale, told her that their PTO can't send the information out to their parents via paper, since it's not their PTO sponsoring it - it has to go through the school, and it has to be quick turnaround if we're really going to market it to all the schools. If we promised the vendors we'd market to other schools and don't, it'll be bad. Someone asked if Jeff had any idea what vendors would be willing to pay. He asked that question, but got no responses. He pointed out that we've learned a lot this year, so if we can't do it, we at least can build on what we learned. MSCR did a vendor fair at Memorial that was successful; we could use them as a resource.

LèAndrea suggested that the timing seems off, it might be better to have it closer to when the organizations send out their information. She suggested it's ok to have differentiated prices - a scale so that non-profit organizations pay less. Shelby explained that the January date was chosen because of a space issue. The gymnastics equipment is here until March; we can factor that stuff in better for next year.

There was more discussion about what to do. Should we extend the deadline until Monday and see what we can do, or just pull it for this year? It would be a last-ditch effort to try to make it happen this year; odds are still low that we'll get what we need. If we extend it, and we get enough by Monday, can the coordinators get it all done in time? The biggest issue that came up was advertising - if not all schools we planned to market to can spread the word, it would be damaging to the effort in the future. Shelby says that it's really too late to make the advertising happen at the other schools. Two people suggest canceling the fair this year. VOTE: Shelby motions we cancel this year, and use what we have for next year (Jeff said that he and Shelley will do it again next year); LèAndrea seconds - passes unanimously. The Vendor Fair is CANCELED for 2015.

### **Playground Update**

Carousel reported that the playground team got together, and decided to put the playground effort on hold because of the referendum. They feel it is too much to ask the broader community to support the playground in addition to asking them to

support the referendum. They will still moving forward, working with green team. There is a Saturday retreat coming up, when the green team and playground team will walk the grounds, coming up with some ideas. The Playground only works if everyone knows about it and has buy-in; the committee is really about the prep work, coming up with a plan, so they'll just spend more time working on that plan.