

Van Hise PTO General Meeting Minutes October 13, 2015 meeting

Present: 9 Board members; 5 parents; Peg Keeler.

Principal's update (Peg Keeler).

Groundbreaking for the new library: There have been multiple meetings with Scherrer (the construction company working on the school expansion) and Findorff (the general contractor). The official groundbreaking will be Thursday, Nov. 11. The PTO Executive Board members and student representatives from each grade level are invited. There will be a pile of dirt and a golden shovel for the ceremony. Ed Hughes and Michael Flores from the Board of Education will be there. The construction company is still sticking to the timeline - we should be in the library by mid-February. Wendy, Dana, and Peg met with the district to find out what kind of furniture will be provided. They will provide some, but the PTO can supplement. All other inside work (making library into two classrooms, etc.) will all happen this summer. The main entrance will be on Segoe, and the whole area will be redesigned. The nurse's station will be in the area by the Segoe entrance (the chorus room) and there will also be office space for the psychologist, social worker, etc. The current front office will be OT/PT and sensory room. Peg's current office will be ESL, and there will be a conference room for IEP meetings, etc.

Opera for the Young: Margaret Jenks brought in the Magic Flute and has led the curriculum up to the performance. The kids should all be able to talk about it with their parents. We weren't slotted to get Opera for the Young again so soon, but Ms. Jenks got funding for an extra performance.

Mural/visiting artist: The visiting artist needed to be extended into this year, as it's a huge project. We are not sure yet where it will go - maybe in the new library.

PBS: This year's theme is be safe, be respectful, be responsible, and be an ally. What is an ally? Someone who steps up for someone else. When they see something wrong, they do something about it. It is part of our Welcoming Schools work, too, which looks at the gender spectrum, including/celebrating all children and families. We are looking at all-gender bathrooms, particularly in new library area. We want kids to feel powerful and able to speak up for each other. PBS and Welcoming Schools are working together. We are also focusing now on families' different perspectives. Wendy is altering vocabulary of PTO communications, using families/students, in preference to parents/children. She is being intentional about the use of families vs. parents, and also looking at how often do we separate by gender?

School goals: The focus of the school goals for this year is reading and math, with particular focus on writing, especially personal narratives.

A Principal Experience: Michael Barbouche, dad of a VHE third grader and CEO of Health Forward, spent the morning with Peg, and learned a ton just within the first hour of the day. He was impressed with the love, care, energy, etc. that goes into running the school. He doesn't generally go to pto meetings, etc., and didn't realize how rich the program is. He suggested doing something like mini YouTubes so families can see what's really going on in the school.

Open House: Peg reports that this year's open house was amazing. There were lots of smiles. The purpose has shifted to an opportunity to celebrate and to give families the opportunity to see where their student sits, what kind of work they've been doing, etc. We didn't run out of pizza, in fact the UW volunteers got to bring some pizza home. The PTO provides meals for the teachers, too, on open house night, to make things a little easier. The PTO also provides pizza for families, which gets more people to participate (rather than selling pizza as they had in the past).

Questions for Peg: A new room rep asked what reps are supposed to do. Wendy suggests that if reps get feedback from parents, either positive or negative, they should pass it along to the PTO. Last year Carousel was the coordinator, this year Maggie is coordinating. This year, we are not requiring reps to come to pto meetings. We will reevaluate that decision at the end of the year. Maggie will forward pertinent information from the meeting to the reps. What about other duties? Reps will collect donations for the silent auction baskets and be game captains for the carnival. They'll also pass along information to classroom families and/or teachers (via Friday updates).

Can parents come to the Opera tomorrow? Peg notes that there's not a lot of space, but parents can come, if they don't mind sitting on the floor or standing, etc.

Hedgie Gear (Jolynne Roorda)

Hedgie gear will be available November 1. There's a different design this year, actually, a couple different designs, including Hedgzilla. John and Janna, who run the Hill Farms Pool, designed the Hedgezilla. There will also be some more traditional Hedgie gear. We will sell it again in the spring. There will be a water bottle and possibly a pin available as well.

Peg reports that Jen Roth did a coffee thing for staff - through PBS, trying to do things for kids, buddies, and staff. Staff all got ally buttons - coffee and buttons - invited Jen to provide the coffee. Cadence coffee (cold brew). Her Dad runs the company that does the Hedgie gear.

Direct appeal update (Wendy Crabb)

As of today (October 13, 2015), the total collected from the direct appeal is about \$8,000. The drive is officially extended to the October 30. Afan Ottenheimer commented that Hamilton has a ton of boxtops that they throw away because they don't have someone to collect them (cut them off products used at the school). He suggested maybe having a liaison to Hamilton (a student) to collect them for VHE.

Library furniture is expensive - probably around \$20-30,000, because it has to be extremely durable.

Budget update (Dana McCloskey)

As of today (October 13, 2015), we have \$52,000 in the bank. We try to keep reserve of \$5,000 that is just never spent. Dana presented the rest of the budget (posted to the PTO web site).

Dana noted that the after school classes bring in lots of money. The teachers are paid for their time, and there are some other volunteers, but the classes are a major source of revenue for the PTO.

Events Update (Wendy Crabb and others)

Art Fair: this year, there will be food carts there; they will donate a percentage of their income to VHE. Wendy wants to include an ad in Midvale Heights newsletter. Also the Fit To Go band from MSCR will be there.

Carnival: There's been a turnover in who's running the carnival. Kristin will get the list of volunteers from the signup at open house, and two people have volunteered to do the raffle. Stephanie McFarlane (one of the raffle volunteers) would like to talk to someone about that, because she wants to start early since the carnival is early this year. A meeting should happen soon to get things going. Maggie was planning to get an email out, but she needed to get contact info.

Vendor fair: We tried to pull together a vendor fair last year, but didn't get enough people/organizations signed up. We will try again this year. The idea of the vendor fair is to give families ideas of what to do with kids over the summer (camps and other activities).

Community fund raising events: There are many new events planned for this year. The Barnes and Noble book fair in November, Metcalfe's will be donating a portion of profits to anyone mentioning Van Hise in January (?), there will be one through Office Depot, there was one at Vitense Golf Land on registration day, and Sherry Nields (fundraising events coordinator) will set up the Vitense fund raiser again on the last day of school.

Ongoing donations: When people go to Amazon through the link on the PTO web site, Van Hise gets a donation (a percent of the purchase).

Expenses (Dana McCloskey): We have a few grants from last year that have not been paid out yet, notably the Chrome books. Every year, we solicit grants from teachers. They show them to Peg first, then we get together and vote on whether to fund the grants. Usually the grants are funded, but sometimes they are not.

Sometimes the PTO has further questions before funding is approved. Some of the things Peg can get through other budget sources. We aim to give \$10,000 in grants in the fall, and \$10,000 in the spring.

One grant request is movement stools. These allow kids to move around while they work so they can concentrate more easily. The school has actually purchased some with the local budget and tried them out with a few kids. It helps kids a lot, and can be life-changing.

Wendy will send out a spreadsheet with the grant requests for this year and the board will discuss them at the November meeting.

Teacher stipends: each of the teachers gets a \$200 stipend (some get \$250 or \$100). The stipend is used for classroom supplies.

Social Justice Program: LèAndrea is taking on leadership of the program this year, but so far this year there are not as many families that have been identified as being in need. We have not been sending home meals, etc. It is a matter of doing some more digging, working with new social worker. We may want to find a new way to provide the food, so kids aren't going home with bags of food that other kids can see. Maybe something like a meals on wheels type of thing. Jolynne suggested tying into the adoptive church (Midvale Lutheran Church) to get support with this kind of thing. 12 volunteers from the church have been hooked up with classrooms. Van Hise no longer has Schools of Hope volunteers because of a funding cut, so the church volunteers fill that gap. There will be a note in newsletter about donating winter clothes. Coats for Kids - LèAndrea will send out information. Van Hise has 50 coats and 30 pairs of snow pants that are meant for kids who need them. They just need some organization. Someone suggested setting up a Sign-up Genius, the estimate is that 10 parents could do it in about an hour.

Dana reports that if the budget shakes out the way it seems to be heading, we'll have about \$48,000 unallocated. That money can be used for the library and/or the playground. The budget cycle is July 1-June 30.

VOTE to pass budget. Wendy moved, Carrie Schwoerer seconded, budget passes. Because of our income, we'll have to pay to have our taxes done (over \$50,000).

Grants from last year. Beth Cantwell requested and was approved for a projector, but the new library will have that equipment. Now she would like to use that money for something else, called Random Acts of Art. It is a \$900 grant, for ally art. It is not vandalism; participant just randomly leave things around for people to see/enjoy. Kids will be doing the art. It was suggested that Ms. Cantwell can just reapply and send in the grant application. The project is through the Foundation for Madison Public Schools endowment money. \$895, teachers could write proposal. Process + product, intentional, what does it mean to you to be an ally.

Fast fill water stations: We are at a point where we can go ahead and order the water stations if we're comfortable with it. There would be one by cafeteria and one by the breezeway. Wendy talked to Mike Hertting (chief of staff at MMSD) to get pricing. We can get it wrapped into the library construction, and it is in the library budget (but we pay for it). With installation, the cost is \$6,000 for both units. Are there filter units? We should find out, because if so, that'll be an ongoing expense.

Dana asks if we should put the money for the library and the water stations into the budget so people can see what we're planning to spend (\$25,000 for library furniture, \$6,000 for water dealies).

Wendy asks if playground people have had any discussions yet (Carousel and Kristin). They are still working on it and plan to have more to report at the next PTO meeting.

School dance: We'll ask Danielle Thai to send her notes to Miss Chanel, who will be working with Tien Thai to plan the dance this year. We'll send out a PTO email about getting more volunteers.

Other business: Stephanie McFarlan will run the raffle, with help from others, Maggie Hogan will coordinate the carnival as a whole. We still need someone to run games and the prize table. Wendy thinks we have a lot of consolation prizes left over from last year.