

Van Hise PTO General Meeting Minutes November 3, 2015 meeting

Present: 9 Board members; 3 parents; Peg Keeler.

Principal's update (Peg Keeler): November conferences: The 1st grade conferences will be different - they'll consist of academic parent teacher teams. For the other grades, teachers want feedback from parents about conferences, and the extent to which kids should be involved. Teachers will take more of a lead for the fall conferences and the specials teachers will have activities for kids so that there can be some time for parents and teachers to meet without kids. Question: Are conferences only for parents and teachers? No, the kids will be involved too, conferences are just more led by teachers in the fall. The kids can be there as long or little as parents want.

The English Language Learner School Improvement Plan presentation in Dec. will be supported by PTO - transportation will be provided, etc.

Peg's input on teacher grant applications: Peg asked the teacher who wanted a whole classroom of Hokki stools (Sharon Jimenez) to gather some data on how well it works for everyone. Ms. Jimenez also requested 2 adult Hokki stools for herself and Maureen (her assistant) because the stool helps with her bad back. 20 of Ms. Jimenez's students loved the stool; the 2 who didn't were uncomfortable because there's no back. The special ed team also wants some to spread throughout school to those who need them. The request from the special ed team was a separate request from Ms. Jimenez's.

Outside Fundraiser Update (Sherry Nields): Upcoming fundraisers - 11/21 Barnes and Noble book fair. We get a higher percentage if we take it in gift cards, so we'll do that and give the cards to the teachers and the librarian.

Sherry asked for feedback; she is trying to get fundraisers once per month, but is having trouble getting a benefit night at any shops at Hilldale to coincide with Parents Night Out, because the stores are all corporates now and can't do that kind of local fund raising. The Serrv fundraiser will happen. Sherry is trying to get locals to participate - Whoops, etc. Restaurants won't do parents night out. Sherry is hoping that January will be a fundraiser at Metcalfe's, but it hasn't been finalized. It would be 5% from every purchase when people say they're with VHE. Great Dane night will be in February, March will have the Scholastic book fair in the new library, so Sherry might arrange a fundraiser at a restaurant but no other activity. April has Science Night, so Sherry wonders if the fundraiser should just be food again, or if we should just skip April, and take a break that month? She is still trying to cut a deal with the Food Carts for the art fair, and has gotten the MSCR Fit To Go band booked for 3 hours during the art fair. The food carts would be through an organization, and VHE would get a percentage of their sales. In June she has set up the Vitense

fundraiser again for last day of school. She suggests trying to make it a yearly activity for the day of registration and the last day of school. Chuck E. Cheese offered to do a weekday night. Sherry asked for opinions, and it was suggested that we just try it in April and see what happens. They'll give 10 tokens to each kid. If it's a bust we won't do it again.

School supply boxes (Wendy Crabb): Wendy got information from First Day school supplies, and was impressed with what she learned. College students and student athletes make the kits, the boxes are made by developmentally disabled workers. Teachers tell the company what supplies they need, and the company supplies them. First Day will even pull all the art supplies out, e.g., so that students and teachers don't have to separate communal supplies from individual supplies. First Day said they can handle all the splits. It's not necessarily cheaper than parents shopping on their own for supplies; Wendy thinks the price is comparable to Staples prices for their supply boxes. Some groups tack on \$20 to each box as a fundraiser; we tacked on less than that in the past. The last day for orders through First Day is 6/30. Wendy's not sure about shipping cost, but they'll deliver it into the school. Wendy suggests trying First Day for next year. Classroom reps can coordinate with teachers regarding supply lists. The lists need to be finalized by early March. Sarah Van Riet moves we move forward with First Day for school supply boxes for the 2016/2017 school year, Sherry and LéAndrea seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Food/warm coat drive (Wendy Crabb): Wendy proposed doing a food drive/warm coat drive starting this week, something low-key, for example, just putting a barrel outside the office. Jolynne suggested we could share the drive with Midvale Lutheran Church (which adopted the school this year). It was agreed this was a good idea. Carousel suggests an email asking people to bring donations to the dance on Friday. We need warm clothes for small kids and blankets. Wendy will send email to Peg; Peg will send it on to Midvale Lutheran Church.

Carnival (Stephanie McFarlane): Jodi and Stephanie have taken over the raffle portion of the carnival. They want help contacting businesses and are asking if anyone here would be willing to contact 10 businesses. They have divided the businesses into two lists. Part 1 includes businesses we've successfully raised money from in the past, and part 2 includes new ones. Preferably, the contacting of the businesses would happen this week. Their ultimate goal to get a base of 20-40 parents who will each contact 10 businesses every year. They are thinking of asking for sponsorships - if there are businesses willing to sponsor the event, we could maybe offer to put their logo and a thank you on the web site or something similar. This might get us a little extra money. They are also suggesting a gift card pull - participants would pay \$20 to draw a random gift card worth \$15, \$20, or \$25. Stephanie and Jodi are trying to think of a couple ways to raise an extra \$1000. Sherry suggests having lists of 5-10 businesses ready to go at the dance, and give people the lists there. The other thing Sherry suggested is to bring your kids along to as businesses for donations - it makes it harder to say no. Is there a script? They

have a letter to paste into an email or mail out. Donations can be gift cards or merchandise. Peg can put a copy of the list in the teachers lounge, Mrs. Mahr has had her kids write letters - there's not enough time for that this year, but maybe they could write thank-yous. Sarah Van Riet volunteered to do the last page of Part I of the list of businesses, starting with SwimWest and going down.

Constant Contact (Wendy Crabb): Constant Contact is a new email listserv that completely replaces the old way of doing things. In theory, the parents' MMSD web site information drops into it automatically. There's been a glitch, but it's been re-done and should work better from now on. Several board members have the password, anyone on the board can use it. There has also been some kind of problem with the number of megabytes allowed, or number of pictures. If anyone needs to use it, and needs address and password, ask a board member.

Future Meetings (Wendy Crabb): Wendy and Peg met, and will try to do parent education in February and April, focusing on social/emotional learning instead of academic, for example, Zones of control, and mindset, engaging kids in productive struggle (grit). We'll start advertising those as soon as possible.

Grants (Wendy Crabb): We discussed the spreadsheet of grant applications, and 2 late additions to it. The total amount of all the applications is under the \$10,000 budget, so we could fund all of them, but aren't required to. For example, one request is for a whole classroom of Hokki stools, but does the whole class really need them? Can we modify the request and get some certain number of stools for the school? The special ed team asked for 24, and they're working really well for those kids. If we ask the special ed team how many they would need if every kid who needs one got one? Then, instead of one whole classroom getting the stools, everyone who needs one will have one. What about the 2 teacher chairs? Ok for those, then we'll go back to the special ed team for clarification.

The custodian request for \$400 for new, lighter tables: approved.

World Atlases - \$850: Why isn't MMSD providing atlases? Have we asked the district? What's the rule? Peg has used up her pot of money from the district: approved.

Adaptive equipment (switch toys for occupational therapy) - \$200. This equipment provides a way for non-verbal kids to participate in a classroom: approved.

Lined magnetic dry erase boards - \$56: Wendy suggests moving this request to the school, because it's such a small amount.

Tickets for Link Up concert for 4th grade \$460: There's a curriculum attached, trying to get students to read notes, read longer phrases, and persevere with it. It also teaches them to recognize patterns and analyze them. Will this be annual? There are only a certain number of field trips allowed by the district and beyond that, they

have to find other funding. LèAndrea motions to follow up, Afan seconds. Wendy will follow up via email. [Note from 11/30/15, the email follow up resulted in this request being funded]

Sumdog Math subscription - \$220: Teachers sold parking spaces by DPI downtown on Badger game day and got the money for this. That money almost covers it, and the teachers are asking PTO to cover the gap. How is it different from Xtra Math? Is Xtra Math free?: approved. [Afan abstained]

Zones of Regulation - \$225: This is also a possible topic for the February meeting. The grant would fund the purchase of books, like "I'm a social detective" they help teach social skills in a fun way. Betsy wants to get the books to help kids recognize their emotions. 7 books and a squishy fidget toy: approved.

Soft lounge chairs, Goosebumps books - \$200: The PTO has budgeted \$25,000 for new library furniture, but Ms. Prager has to make to February before she can get that furniture. These chairs can go to the new library, too. Wendy and Peg noted that the book count will go down in the new library to be more in line with other schools. In the new library, the tech will need to fit on the walls, and the new shelves for the books will be low, so there's not as much room for books. There will be a classroom in the library with a big screen, with tables around it and smaller tables with learning projects. There will also be a lot of windows. Approved.

Steel toed boots - \$500: Afan talked to the custodians, and asked them if they got steel toed boots, and they said no, they're not provided. Afan was thinking of funding up to \$130 per custodian, they'd buy them and submit receipts. It would be a one-time purchase, though we might purchase more in 5 years or so. There is a long-term sub custodian on the VHE side, the permanent person is out. We would stipulate that it's for permanent employees. The \$500 = \$130x4. Approved.

One request was late, it will be considered in the spring.

Playground (Carousel Bayrd and Kristin Ruedi-Krause): Carousel and Kristin are looking into new equipment for the playground; they started the process a year ago. They did visits, talked to 1 developer that the school district recommended. This developer gives you plans for free, and are connected with companies that supply equipment. About a dozen families visited various playgrounds. They started with the idea of a little bit of everything; nature, quiet, swings, climbing, spinning, etc. They got plans (a couple different versions) but put a hold on it because of the referendum. This year, they started step 2 - Kristin and Carousel reached out to another group. Shelby thought they were going to get 3 bids. Carousel and Kristin are presenting group 2's proposal tonight. Plan 1 was by the company that did the Randall playground; the entire plan would cost \$150,000 if it was all implemented. We can pick and choose and/or do a little at a time, if we wanted to spend less.

Group 2 is a company called ZDA. It is a more nature-based plan. The discussion covered subjects like elevation and integrating the garden, so it was a more complex conversation. The plan also took into consideration flow and water issues and talked about doing zones: climbing zones, quiet zones, etc. Carousel has some reservations; Kristin loves ZDA. Carousel liked that group 1 gave us the plan for free in exchange for buying equipment from them. Group 2 gives us a vision/foundation we can use for the long-term. The price they quoted is for everything :site analysis, playground plan, fundraising plan, etc. (though we may not need all of it): \$6,000-\$7,800 just for the plan. Part of the conversation was what should the next step be? If we say we love this, but we're a public school - what are we willing to do, if anything? Can we offer less and see what we can get for it? Also, we can't sign a contract before they show us anything. If they did less, we would have to do more.

ZDA showed what they did for the Montessori school in Middleton. Shelby had suggested talking to the school as a reference. Carousel said they showed the plans they made, and she thinks we could maybe go with less plan. She asked them about that, and they didn't say no to doing that. Jolynne asked if they can't give us a general estimate of how much the final project will be - will an \$8,000 plan mean a \$100,000 playground? It could be implemented in phases. Carousel sees merit to someone doing a master plan. Addressing the water is important. ZDA doesn't sell any equipment, so we'd have to contract with someone else for that. We need to find out how much the playground at the Montessori school playground cost. They also did Kennedy Heights. Afan suggests giving them a general description of the other company's bid without disclosing the company, and asking how much a similar plan would cost.

Wendy suggests setting up a community night, say in February, to put the choices up for people to see and comment on. Wendy knows a global expert on nature-based playgrounds. Can we talk to her, just see what she thinks? Maybe she would be willing to give a free consultation - but her approach is very focused on one type of play (calming).

Carousel and Kristin will go back to ZDA and say we want to check references and that the cost of the plan is too high. They'll also check with the Montessori school and Kennedy Heights